

'Tombstone' needs one; 'Father' is powerful

By Gerri Pare and Henry Herx
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — *Tombstone* (Hollywood) is a Western dud from George P. Cosmatos — director of one of the *Rambo* movies — who apparently thinks a good oater means fancy gun-twirling in fancy duds with lots of not-so-fancy buckets of bloodletting.

It tells of a year in the life of Wyatt Earp (Kurt Russell), retired sheriff of Dodge City, now relocated in 1879 to Tombstone, Ariz., to go into business with brothers Virgil and Morgan (Sam Elliott and Bill Paxton, respectively).

His tubercular buddy, the sharp-shooting, boozing gambler Doc Holliday (Val Kilmer), soon joins them in the town, which is overrun by a gang of murderous outlaws led by Michael Biehn and Powers Boothe.

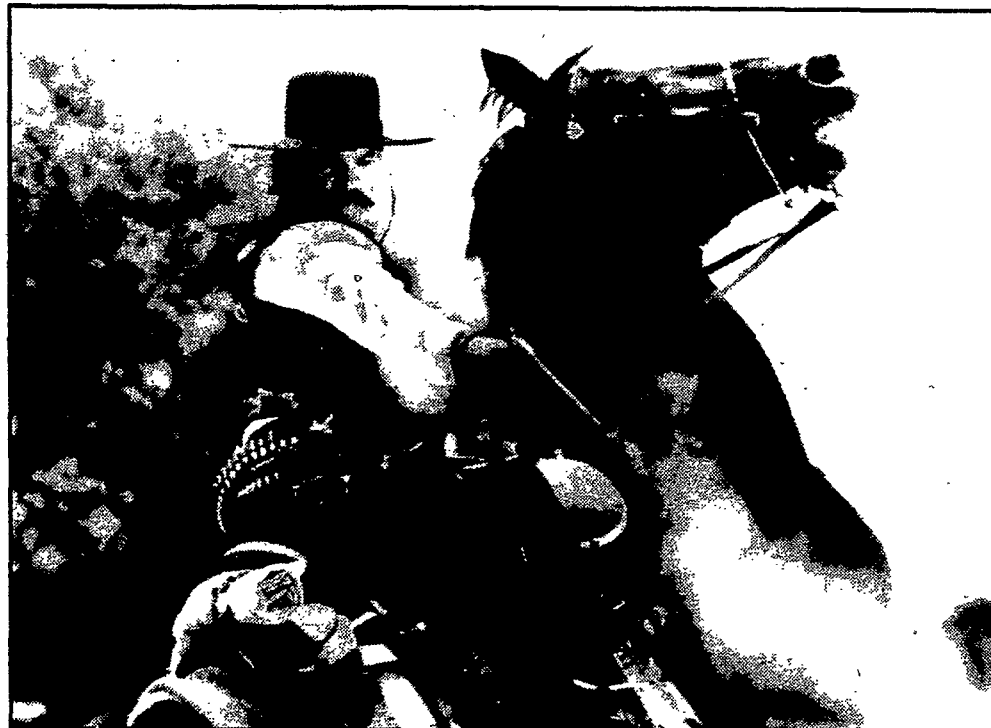
Providing fluffy decoration between gun draws is Dana Delany, who is eager to separate Wyatt from his laudanum-addicted wife (Dana Wheeler-Nicholson).

Though Wyatt protests he is no longer a lawman, he promptly makes his presence felt and soon macho threats and posturings turn into a series of cold-blooded killings — on both sides.

It's all been done before — and better — though you wouldn't know it from the movie's self-important tone. The acting is stiffly mannered, making Kilmer's sickly, sweaty Doc unintentionally funny.

Tilted camera angles framing the "good guys" as heroic giants are overused and shots of them with lightning striking all around look like outtakes from a sci-fi movie. The dialogue, too, sounds unnatural except toward the end — when Delany cries, "I don't understand any of this. It's all ugly."

Yes, it is. When a movie comes down to a handsomely shot series of bloody shootouts glamorizing and glorifying vigilantes' multiple murders, its moral center is out of whack.



John Bramley/Hollywood Pictures

Kurt Russell stars in *Tombstone* as legendary U.S. Marshal Wyatt Earp, who is determined to leave peace keeping to more foolish men.

Tombstone deserves an early epitaph.

Due to excessive violence, including numerous grisly murders, acceptance of vigilante justice, recurring substance abuse and an instance of rough language, the U.S. Catholic Conference classification is O — morally offensive. The Motion Picture Association of America rating is R — restricted. (GP)

'In the Name of the Father'

In the Name of the Father (Universal) dramatizes the case of the Guildford Four, one of the many tragedies marking the long struggle between the Green and the Orange in Ulster.

It is a simple but no less painful case of a miscarriage of British justice engineered by the London police assigned to stop a 1974 wave of IRA terrorist bombings in Great Britain.

The movie centers on Gerry Conlon (Daniel Day-Lewis), an aimless Belfast lad sent by his father, Giuseppe (Pete Postlethwaite), to stay with a London aunt so as to be out of the way of the troubles in the North.

Instead, Gerry gets mixed up with a group of hippies at the time the IRA blows up a pub in Guildford and the police grab him as a likely suspect.

Pressured by the public to stop the bombings and empowered by the Prevention of Terrorism Act to hold suspects for a week without the right to legal counsel, the police use physical force and threats until the exhausted Gerry can stand it no longer and signs a confession.

So too do three of his equally innocent hippie friends and they stand trial known collectively as the Guildford Four. Also on trial with them are a number

of other falsely accused accomplices, including his father, his aunt and two children.

Though they repudiate their confessions and the evidence against them is circumstantial at best, all are found guilty and sentenced to long prison terms, with Gerry receiving a life sentence.

Director Jim Sheridan keeps these events moving forward with great emotional intensity, contrasting the IRA violence with that of the police and, through it all, the realization of the innocence of those on trial.

But then the movie bogs down in the cliches of prison films, giving an impressionistic account of Gerry's 15-year incarceration before a lawyer (Emma Thompson) finds proof of his innocence in files kept hidden from the court.

Conlon's ultimate exoneration and those of his co-defendants is an emotional high, tempered by the injustice of lost years and the fact that those responsible have never been called to account by a British court.

The result is a powerful story of police misconduct in serving a political end which ruined lives of innocent people.

Yet it seems somewhat a miscalculation to devote so much time to Gerry's imprisonment, most of it in the same cell with his father.

While this is used to explore the generational gap between the father's acceptance of the way things are and Gerry's growing sense that radical changes are necessary, none of it is very deep or, indeed, politically substantive.

Whether American viewers will get emotionally involved in this powerful but unevenly developed drama of personal and political injustice is doubtful, despite the hard work of a strong cast.

Because of recurring menace and violence, unresolved justice questions and occasional rough language, the USCC classification is A-III — adults. The MPAA rating is R — restricted. (HH)

Author's account offers understanding of African events

The Fate of Africa, by Jeremy Harding; Simon & Schuster (New York, New York, 1993); 322 pp.; \$25.

Reviewed by Robert Andre Dumas Sr.
Catholic News Service

Be prepared for an emotional roller-coaster ride as you relive the struggles of six African nations — Angola, Namibia, Western Sahara, South Africa, Mozambique and Eritrea — in Jeremy Harding's *The Fate of Africa*.

The author's journalistic travels and contacts provide exposure to events, circumstances and individuals that will immediately seize your attention and constantly hold it in a viselike grip while generating feelings of anger, sadness, fear and frustration.

The book details several nail-biting episodes in which the reader actually witnesses the front-line experiences of freedom fighters and perceives the tension of knowing that one false move could mean death. These include stealing upon and peering at the enemy's camp at night, or lying face down motionless in a foxhole under searching hostile lights in the Western Sahara. It reads at times almost like an "Indiana Jones" kind of thriller.

There are also rare insights into individuals who are integral parts of the struggle, and a glimpse at extremely ordinary people who become extraordinary as a result of their participation in the "struggle." One of the surprising revelations is the number of poets who've taken up arms.

The author also does a masterful job



of depicting the incredible adaptability of the human spirit, as the book's characters leave the familiar, even as children, and live, love and occasionally die in the most perilous circumstances as if they were the most natural of conditions.

The Fate of Africa is destined to become a classic and is definitely must reading for both African scholars and anyone with a desire to understand African events. South Africa's destabilization efforts in Angola and Mozambique as well as efforts to co-opt South African students into spying on the anti-apartheid movement are detailed.

A look at South African violence from the inside, and the first hand report of Renamo captives in Mozambique provide chilling glimpses into the harsh brutality endured by innocent victims. The interminable and inordinate hardships of the Eritreans as they pursued their struggle almost singlehandedly and the Namibian terror and betrayal in the attainment of freedom are among the memories that the book impresses on the reader.

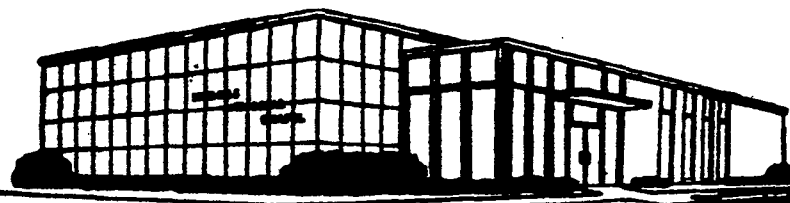
The impact of the Cold War and the

use of Africa as a pawn in that conflict greatly affected African freedom struggles. The book reflects how several movements were forced into the Soviet sphere of influence as a result. In addition, the self-interests of the United States and other Western nations also played a very direct role in creating and perpetuating conflict as well as providing major direct contributions to the killing, maiming and displacement of hundreds of thousands of innocent

Africans, including women and children. Unfortunately Africa's fate does not yet appear to be firmly in the hands of Africans.

Robert Andre Dumas is an adviser for African and Western European affairs in the U.S. Catholic Conference.

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