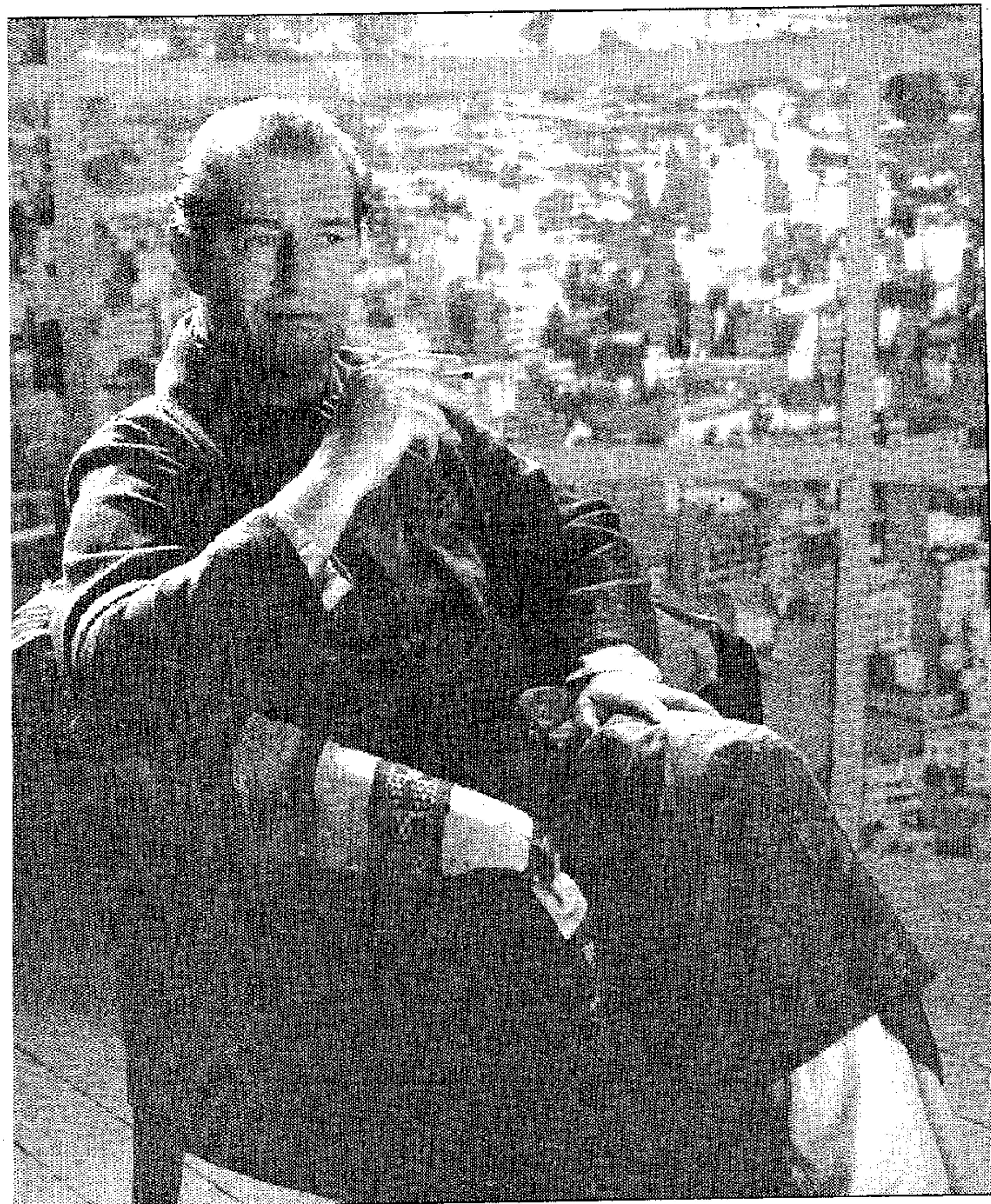


INTERVIEW

Wilde about Oscar



son: Corin Redgrave.

CORIN Redgrave, only son of a British legendary acting dynasty, could easily have been one of the biggest stars of his generation.

Instead, for many years he was as well known for his politics as his acting and the politics was always of what the tabloids described as the 'loony left' variety.

He was a key figure, as the media saw it, of the Trotskyist Workers' Revolutionary Party and, along with outspoken sister Vanessa, saw his beliefs held up to ridicule.

Times and attitudes change and Corin is re-established as an actor, his recent credits including international hits like *Four Weddings and a Funeral*, *In the Name of the Father* and the acclaimed BBC production of Jane Austen's *Persuasion*.

But he still says: "Actors in Britain are not held in the same kind of regard that they are, for example, in Russia and France and some other countries.

"Here there is an unfortunate word, *luvvies*, which makes actors out to be fluffy airheads so when they turn out to have opinions they are told to shut up and go back to being fluffy airheads as if that is

BY JOHN HIGHFIELD

what we are paid for." Political causes and themes remain close to his heart.

He is about to play Oscar Wilde in a new play about the author's three trials on indecency charges, the cause celebre which led to the downfall of one of the 19th century's literary giants.

"Oscar Wilde is probably best known for the fact that he was homosexual," he points out. "That's an extraordinary thing, it's a topsy turvey world. But it was the trial and his time in jail that for generations linked his name all over the world with homosexuality.

Fascinating

"It's an interesting play because it raises the point of how courageously Wilde stood up to that questioning in the trial and how the verdict could almost have gone either way."

What is interesting too is the fact that the Wilde experience has some parallels in the the story which forms the centre of Corin's new film, documentary drama *The Man Who Drove with Mandela*.

It's the story of Cecil Williams, a white South African homosexual,

communist, black rights worker, actor and theatre director who, in 1962, was with the black politician on the journey which led to his arrest and long years of captivity.

Using home movies and rare archive footage, director Greta Schiller, brings together the two forbidden worlds of homosexuality and the anti-apartheid communists.

Corin plays Williams in a series of dramatic monologues based mainly around diary entries and letters.

"The interesting thing is that Williams doesn't appear as somebody who occupied any place of importance in the story of the African National Congress," Corin explains. "It is only when you begin to piece things together, as the film does, that you see what a role he played.

"It is fascinating in the way the best John le Carre stories have of showing you a man for whom the externals of his life are in some ways completely at odds with the actual life that he leads or the role that he plays. It is a quite extraordinary contrast."

The Man Who Drove With Mandela will be screened at Sheffield's Showroom Cinema tonight as part of the Sheffield International Documentary Festival.

The Star

