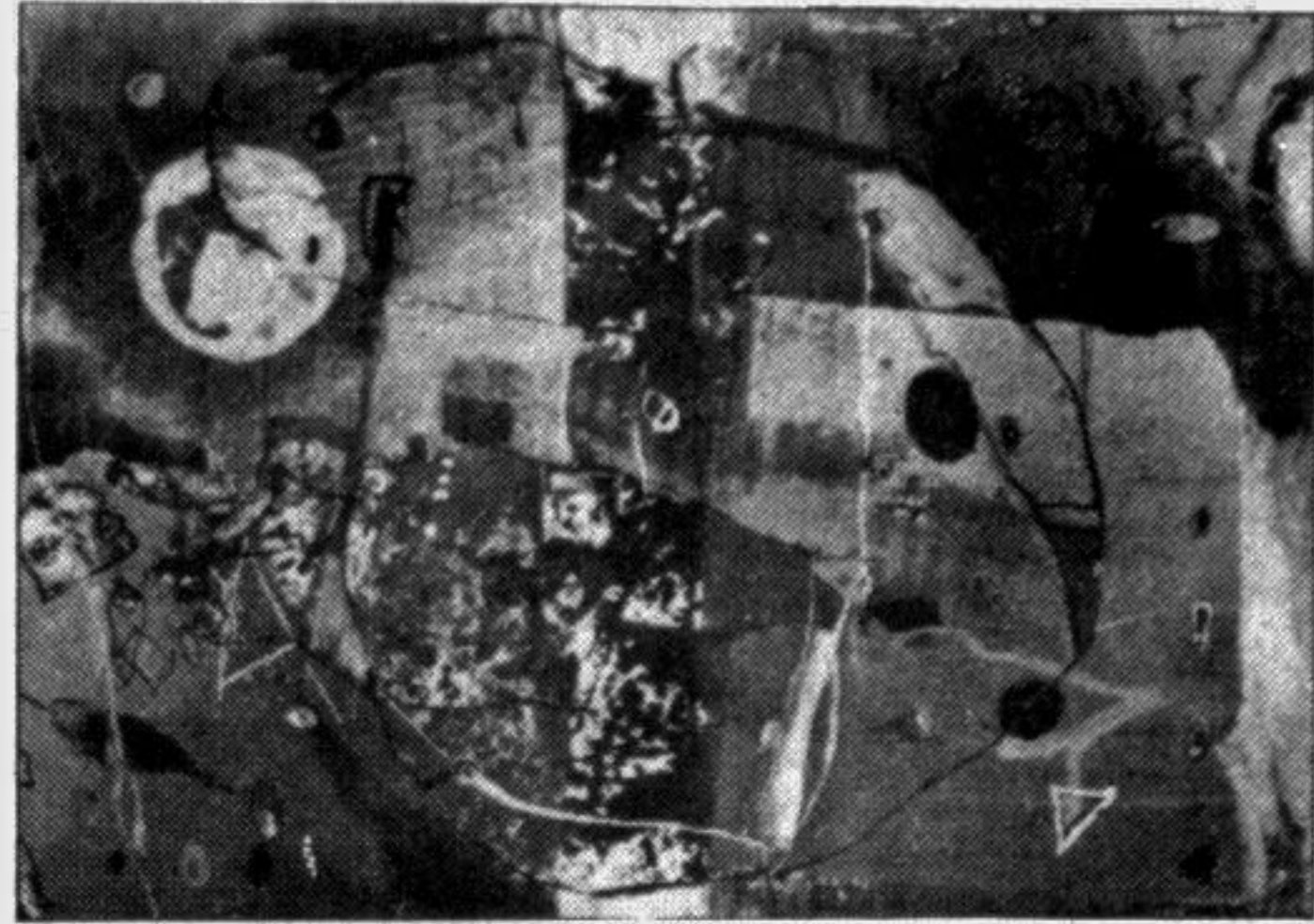


Of Alienation and Anguish

by Fayza Haq

TALKING about his exhibition which was held recently at La Galerie, G.S. Kabir who was here in Dhaka from Japan, remarked, "The life style in Japan is quite different from that in Bangladesh. As a Bengalee, I found that they did not trust me. They had, at first, a dismal concept of our country and felt that someone coming from

with Miro and Debussy. In his recent exhibition "Distrust", Kabir had put together a number of striking, self-confident pieces. They had all been done in Japan. When Kabir first went to Japan, he found it difficult to develop trust among the Japanese acquaintances, being a stranger.



Distrust I

there had not much to contribute. I naturally felt alienated. It was when I got the prize in the Dhaka Asian Biennale that they began giving me some recognition. It is only slowly that I found a change in them. In all my works can be seen the impact of the sense of insecurity."

In his earlier exhibitions, Kabir had shown an admirable awareness of colour. He had used bright colours — red, violet, magenta and green. His technique had retained its earlier innovative qualities, but the images had changed. He was painting themes of reality, fantasy, dream, joy and sorrow. He had applied directly from the can, through a spray, showing remarkable control. A Japanese art critic had compared Kabir

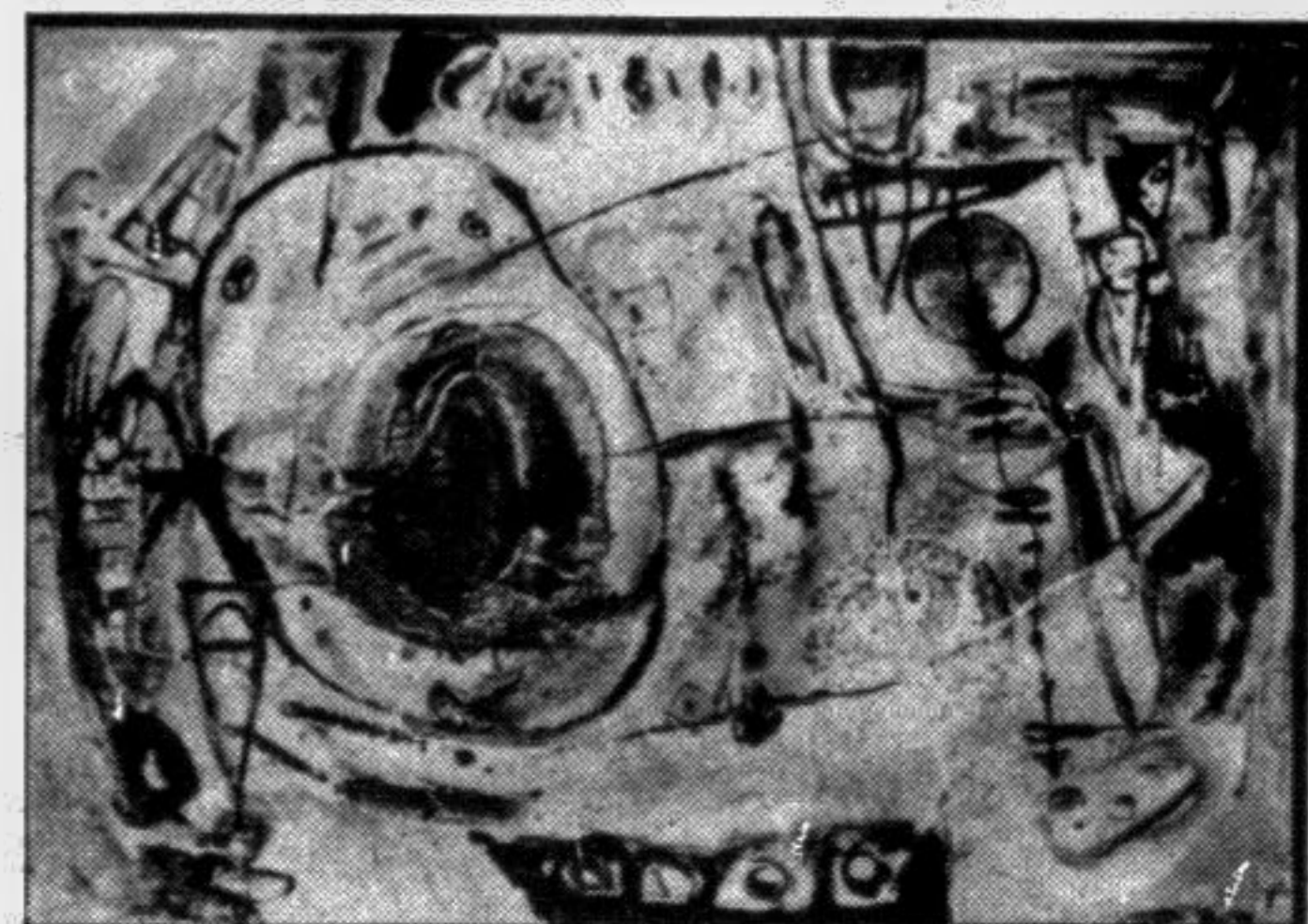
He suffered from fits of depression and sadness. The circles and other forms, the motifs and symbols — the ladders, threads and geometrical designs — all suggest different human emotions. Kabir's forms were chaotic, and constantly evolving. However they were put together in a harmonic piece with the help of symbolism.

Most of the paintings were done in mixed media acrylic based or neo-pearl colours. The use of white was remarkable as it was juxtaposed with the loud colours. The artist had allowed to let his imagination and feelings flow free.

In "Distrust-1" was a white circle which was a part of a Japanese doll. The symbols of triangles, circles and lines represented the limitations of

Bangladesh. "The reason why I have depicted the doll is because I feel the Japanese children are like innocent dolls, specially when I compared them to the people in my country," the artist commented. He had used blue in the backdrop with red and yellow to complete the composition.

"Distrust-11" was a conglomeration of symbolic figures — three women in grey, white and yellow. "Whenever I thought of my country, I could only remember the pain of the people. As a result, I felt I should portray the pain rather than the beauty," Kabir said. Against the background of red and black were intermingling lines because the artist felt that problems could not be sorted out in



Distrust II

his mind. There were patches of black which denoted uncertainty.

In "Distrust-111" were depicted horns that would usher the end of the world, as myths went. Birds and human beings were shown in distorted forms. "I wish I could eradicate all the evils of the world and replace

them with something fresh. The tiny balls of red, blue and yellow are meant to show signs of a new beginning," Kabir elaborated.

"Distrust IV" showed a child playing with a red ball. The rest of the figures were abstract forms of unhappiness and confusion seen in white washes, combined with blue circles and a few blackish squares. Insecurity and destruction was in the mind of the artist.

Talking about his life in Japan, Kabir elaborated, "After two years in Japan, I have finally a number of friends and fans and now feel at home. I held an exhibition of my paintings 'Bangladesh My Love' and people paid as much as 15,300 yens for the lecture and the entry." He is holding an exhibition of his paintings at the moment



at the Bangladesh Trade Fair at Kobe. He hopes to study in Paris after doing his masters from Japan. His research is on modern oil paintings, materials and techniques.

Kabir has had nine solo exhibitions, has participated in 55 group shows, and has won ten awards.

Brilliant Return for Daniel Day-Lewis

by Peter Roberts

THE latest film version of James Fenimore Cooper's novel of pioneers and Indians, "The Last of the Mohicans", was shown in London in the winter of 1992/3 to critical acclaim and box office success. As this was due in no small measure to Daniel Day-Lewis' central performance as the sharpshooting frontiersman Hawkeye, there was considerable relief amongst admirers of this 35-year-old British actor.

It would be impossible to overlook this tall, strikingly good looking performer but for over three years there had been no sign of him in the English capital where he grew up. He had last been seen in London at the National Theatre as Hamlet in the summer of 1989 when his career seemed to be rising to new heights.

For his appearance on stage as the prince of Denmark coincided with the release of the film written and directed by Jim Sheridan in which Day-Lewis gave an award-winning bravura performance as the Irish writer, Christy Brown. Brown, because of cerebral palsy, was forced to write and paint with his left foot, hence the title of his autobiography and the film based on it — "My Left Foot".

Then suddenly everything went wrong for Daniel Day-Lewis. He had returned from taking the National Theatre production of Hamlet on tour to Yugoslavia, where his physically energetic performance was admired even more than in London, when one evening back on stage at the National he suddenly could no longer remember his lines as the Prince of Denmark. An understudy was brought on to complete the performance.

Huge Responsibility

The stress of spending six weeks in a wheelchair whilst filming the role of the severely disabled Christy Brown followed by the huge responsibility of

tackling one of the Shakespeare's longest and most taxing roles at the National Theatre had taken its toll. Day-Lewis was ordered to take a long rest and it was even rumoured that he had in fact decided to give up acting altogether and revert to his first career choice, cabinet making.

At the time, that decision to leave acting altogether seemed quite tragic. Not only had Daniel Day-Lewis been born with remarkable good looks which alone could be a passport to success on stage and in the cinema but he had proved himself an astonishingly versatile performer.

What other performer in recent years had turned in such a series of contrasting screen roles? After playing the Cockney racist punk who became the homosexual lover of a young Asian boy in "My Beautiful Laundrette", he switched to becoming the Edwardian dandy, Cecil, in James Ivory's elegant film version of E M Forster's "A Room with a View".

After that he had taken the role of the young Franz Kafka, followed by the philandering surgeon Tomas in the film "The

Unbearable Lightness of Being". It would have been a sad day indeed if such a chameleon of an actor had been forced to give up whilst still in his thirties because he liked the challenge of a series of varied roles that prevented him from just coasting along on his good looks.

Project Dropped

Relief that with the success of "The Last of the Mohicans" Daniel Day-Lewis was back in the acting fold was soon followed by the realisation that it was never going to be an easy and straightforward life for an artist who takes himself and his work so seriously. He was, for example, to be playing Shakespeare this year in a big budget movie, "Shakespeare in Love", with Julia Roberts as his co-star. But when Day-Lewis decided he did not want to do it the whole project was dropped.

Instead in 1993 he is returning to work in Ireland with Jim Sheridan who wrote and directed him in "My Left Foot". Their second movie together is to be called "The Colours of the Wind".

Daniel Day-Lewis comes from a well connected background which could open many

doors for him had he not been so superbly talented to stand in no need of such help. His father, Cecil Day-Lewis, was a tall and commanding figure who became the Poet Laureate and as such Britain's official poet who was called upon to write verse to celebrate great national occasions.

His mother, Jill Balcon, had been a leading lady with the Old Vic Company in London and later appeared herself in a number of celebrated British films in the 1950's such as "Nicholas Nickleby" and "Highly Dangerous". And her father, Sir Michael Balcon, had been a senior film executive for over 20 years before forming his own organisation, Ealing Studios.

Drama School

With that sort of background it must have seemed inevitable that Daniel Day-Lewis would become a film actor. But as he entered late adolescence was by no means certain. Having enjoyed a public school education at Bedales he found he particularly enjoyed doing woodwork and was thinking of going into cabinet making when he got an audition to enter a drama school in Bristol and did his training there.

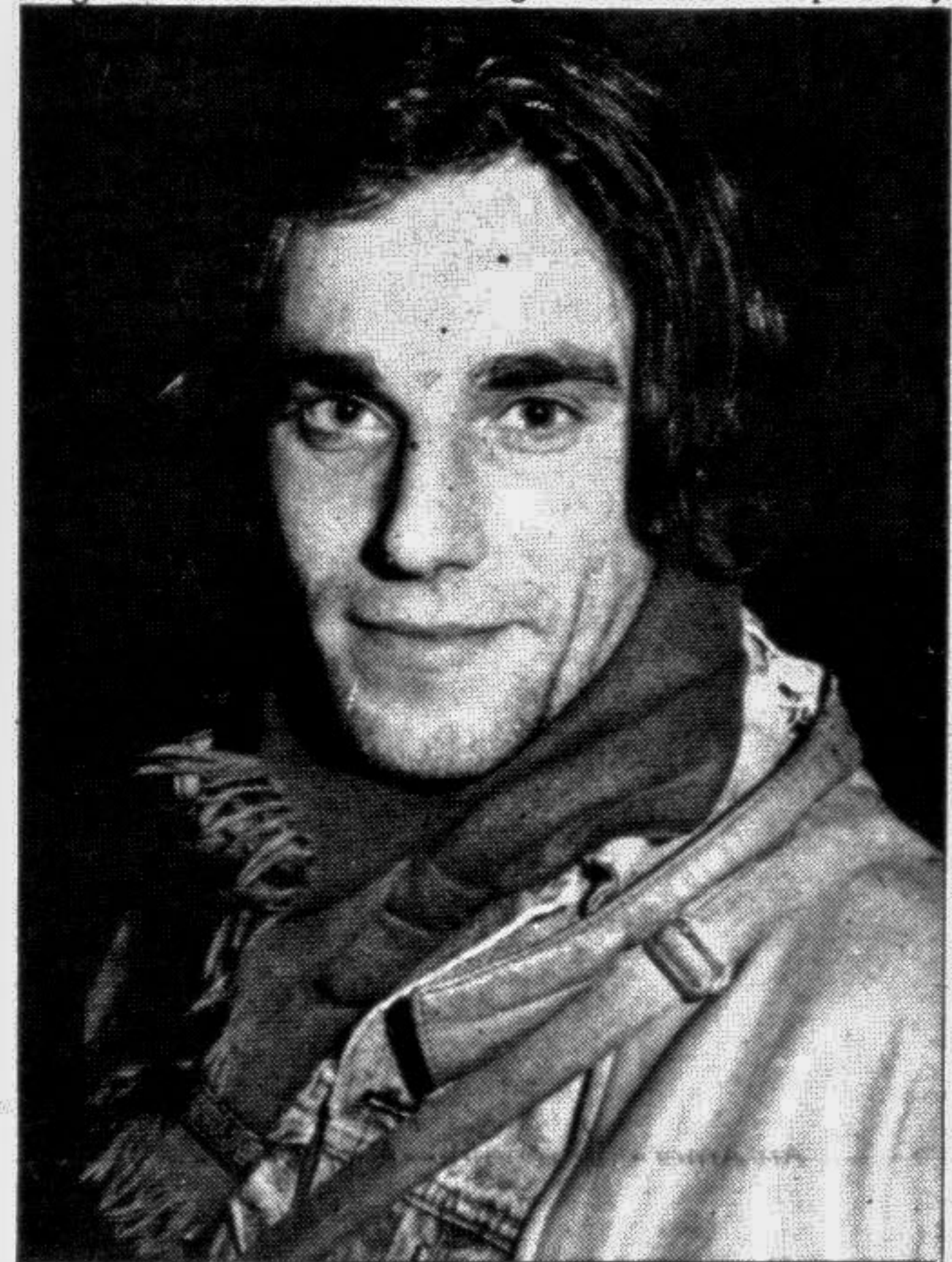
Soon after completing his training he was catapulted into London's West End when he landed a part in Julian Mitchell's long running theatrical hit, "Another Country", set in a public school not unlike those attended by British diplomats turned soviet spies, Burgess and McLean, in the 1930s.

Exceptional Lengths

Daniel Day-Lewis' family background in the cinema and theatre may well have been the spur that forces him to go to exceptional lengths to prove himself to be quite independent of them. He hates self promotion and takes a Garbo-esque attitude towards interviews which he rarely gives and which, when given, prove tortuous for both interviewer and interviewee.

But when it comes to his work nothing is too much trouble. When he was researching the role of the disabled Christy Brown he actually went into a clinic for patients with cerebral palsy. Such serious commitment to his art is unlikely to make the career of Daniel Day-Lewis smoothly predictable but it should ensure that it remains exciting to follow for many years to come.

The writer is Editor, "Plays International", London



Critically-acclaimed British actor Daniel Day-Lewis

The whites after apartheid

Should I Stay

Continued from page 9
tells a myriad of "unrest incidents" in which residents of black townships have had rubber tyres doused in petrol put round their necks and set fire. The stress of daily killings has resulted in whites barricading their homes. Burglar alarm sales have grown phenomenally and private security firms patrol the wealthier suburbs in the main urban centres.

High walls with sharp glass shavings secure the luxurious mansions in Cape Town's Bishopscourt and Johannesburg's Sandton residential suburbs and many property owners have revolvers and train at shooting ranges.

White insecurity reached fever pitch after the slaughter of 11 parishioners at a Sunday night church service in Cape Town. The attack brought the violence into a white middle-class area. Such events fuel the white right-wing whose neo-Nazi symbols and blatant racism raise political tension.

Tens of thousands of white South Africans have already sought refuge in Toronto, Perth, London and Sydney, where supportive expatriate communities try to simulate the privileged lifestyle so unique to Southern Africa.

In South Africa's Sunday press lawyers and immigration services from all over the world try to attract nervous whites to leave the land of their birth. Ten separate services may be advertised in one weekend edition. One prominent advertisement promises that "in one confidential consultation we can give you the answer as to where your skills are in demand overseas and where you may qualify for resident status."

South Africans are increasingly being enticed to New Zealand. An advert reads "Our MD (ex-SA) will be conducting seminars and interviews in all the major centres during September. Isn't your family's future worth a phone call?"

In the midst of this uncertainty, removal and transportation companies do a roaring trade. Stuttards Van Lines moved £3.7 million of personal effects out of South Africa last year. The company now ranks as the eighth largest international mover in the world. International division director Louis le Roux says this translates into 200 to 250 families moving out of the country each month.

Those who elect to remain face a declining job market. While the faltering economy is a contributory factor, the implementation of "Affirmative Action" means white graduates are increasingly losing out to black candidates who receive preference when applying for a position.

Job advertisements routinely ask for "Xhosa speakers" or mandate that a "black language" would be an advantage. The key euphemism used in personnel advertising usually declares that the company is

"committed to Affirmative Action and is an equal opportunity employer," leaving little doubt as to which skin colour is preferred.

For South Africa's young white professionals serious adaptation is necessary to alleviate the hourly stress of staying. Privilege based on skin colour is no more. If anything, it is a distinct disadvantage to be a white graduate in South Africa today.

Young whites need to develop a mind-set that looks for opportunities amid the uncertainty. Markets are expanding and international contact is growing. The under-privileged sector of the community is hungry for knowledge and success, and if harnessed successfully, it can sustain a dynamic and exciting period ahead.

Adaptation requires a degree of acceptance for the time when the nightly news bulletins begin to refer to President Nelson Mandela. The new system has to be understood in terms of priorities. No more impressive facilities for white areas. Money will go to upliftment and the provision of basic services to deprived people.

While we will all have to adapt to high levels of societal violence, the country has the best chance it ever had to succeed. Interim constitutional measures provide the highest degree of individual protection seen in the last 45 years. South Africans need to be enthusiastic about what is positive and not just miserable about what is bad.

Stress can be alleviated by getting involved. Community organisations, involving South Africans in diverse areas of interest, abound. People who were kept apart are today finding each other and for those privileged to be part of this, it is a spur to a tarnished spirit.

Lauren and myself were still quite depressed when we listed the pros and cons of staying in this turbulent country. We left the restaurant satisfied with our pizza but uncertain as to where we would be living in a few years. On leaving the brand new Cape Town Waterfront Complex I stopped and looked around.

Here was investment on a massive scale. New shops, offices and restaurants were flourishing. Conglomerates were investing millions of rands in high-tech bars. Foreign tourists were streaming in. Night-clubs were full of revellers out for a good time. The political situation was far from their minds.

Most significantly, people of all races were enjoying themselves as they would in any major city in the world. They were mixing freely and peacefully. Maybe the new South Africa is not such a bad place after all.

DANIEL SILKE is a freelance South African writer who contributes to newspapers in Cape Town, Washington, Tokyo and Harare.



How a Verwoerd

Continued from page 9
Verwoerd, a 29-year-old philosophy lecturer at the University of Stellenbosch, was addressing an ANC meeting in the conservative white Cape Town suburb of Parow.

Both the venue and the speaker, as well as the language (Afrikaans), were a sign of just how much South Africa has changed since President F W de Klerk lifted in 1990 Hendrik Verwoerd's 30-year ban on the ANC.

Parow political meetings are usually for organisations with views ranging from far right to neo-Nazi. Although not even the ANC expects the constituency to yield many votes when the country eventually holds its first non-racial election, the organisation met there to capitalise on a claimed rise in white sympathy following the April assassination of an ANC radical Chris Hani.

Other black-dominated political parties are trying similar crossovers. The night before the ANC meeting the local branch of Zulu chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Freedom Party also fielded white Afrikaans-speakers in the Parow Civic Centre.

One was Afrikaner Jurie Mentz, a member of Parliament who defected to Inkatha. One other National Party parliamentarian joined him soon afterwards and others are still expected to hitch their political wagons to Chief Buthelezi, the main black rival to the ANC.

For some the decision is largely cynical; their political careers are more likely to flourish in a black party which will promote prominent whites to attract other anxious white voters. Yet there are at least some whites who support Chief Buthelezi because they believe there will be only two meaningful choices in the first non-racial poll scheduled for next April: the pro-Communist (as they see it) ANC or the staunchly capitalist Inkatha.

While the exact extent of this support is impossible to gauge at this stage, the realignments by Jurie Mentz and Wilhelm Verwoerd — and the presence of several thousand "coloureds" (people of mixed race) at a recent De Klerk rally — signal a significant disintegration of South Africa's traditional political borders.

Afrikaner Voices

Continued from page 9
firmed membership of between 900,000 and a million.

Many black Natal residents persistently allege Inkatha's membership is artificially inflated because they are forced to join the party before they can work in KwaZulu.

Buthelezi's controversial boycott of the constitutional talks and his increasingly irascible public outbursts may also alienate many potential supporters. He withdrew his team from the talks in June to protest the "premature" setting of an election date. He may still

choose secession over participation in the ballot.

Whatever Buthelezi's decision, it is likely to be at De Klerk's expense. The President's National Party, which promotes broadly similar policies to Buthelezi, spent years projecting Inkatha as a credible black alternative to the ANC.

State subsidies and even a slush fund were used to help the party ultimately expected to form an anti-ANC electoral pact with the government.

However, the soured relationship — partially because Inkatha feels excluded from agreements between the government and the ANC — has left the National Party caucus divided over whether to wait for Buthelezi to return to the negotiations. If De Klerk abandons Inkatha, he risks more of his supporters joining the white shift towards the previously all-Zulu party.

If, on the other hand, he continues wooing Buthelezi, the Afrikaner President may not be able to win further negotiating concessions from the ANC.

A Dutch house with ANC supporters and read a then-banned book by former newspaper editor Donald Woods about how police tortured to death the Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko.

He said: "I didn't believe all of it, but I realised that if some of it were true then a lot of other things I'd heard could also be true."

Verwoerd wants to avoid a high political profile in favour of using his network of Afrikaner contacts to ease their fears and provide them access to information about the ANC.

He said: "I want to say to people that in the short run it may look as if I'm a traitor, but in the long run it's essential for their survival to have good relations with the rest of the country."

ARLENE GETZ is a correspondent for the "Sydney Morning Herald". She has covered the southern African region for 14 years.

Yet shifting loyalties have done little to promote political tolerance. Wilhelm Verwoerd received several death threats after his participation in the public meeting was announced, and he is under no illusions about the right-wing capacity for hatred.

"I'm worried about what will happen after the meeting," he said. "There are enough crazy people out there who think killing me will be a favour to the memory of Hendrik Verwoerd." Wilhelm's decision to join the ANC was made at great personal cost. His family calls him a traitor and his father refuses to speak to him. "He has basically disowned me," said Verwoerd. "He thinks I've lost my way because of indoctrination, that I was corrupted by the liberals, the English, when I studied at Oxford University."

"In fact, my most important single reason for taking so long to join the ANC was what it was going to do to my family. But then I think that you come to a point where you realise you cannot allow your life, your convictions, to be determined by other people, especially not your family."

"I have a deep sense that I will not be true to myself if I do not make some contribution to reconciliation now. Joining the ANC is not an unproblematic way of committing yourself. I'm not naive about problems within the organisation, but it's making a commitment at an historical phase in which the ANC is more than just a party."

An earnest, thoughtful man with an outstanding academic record, Verwoerd acknowledges the difficulties of shrugging off his sheltered white upbringing to join his family's traditional enemies.

It was only when he left his whites-only Stellenbosch school, he recalls, that he realised his grandfather was not the universal hero described to him by white Afrikaners.

"But it was only towards the end of my university career, and when I went to Holland and Britain, that I took the next step and said apartheid was not just wrong now, and it was not just wrong because of the consequence, it was even wrong then."

The real breakthrough, he said, came during a three-month spell in which he shared

Songs Moist with Mellow Emotions

by Iftikhar A Chowdhury

It might seem a bit cynical, but it's true that nowadays it isn't all that difficult for any aspirant young poet or singer to publish a book of verse or bring out a collection of songs in audio cassette form.

Where genuine talent or genius has become secondary to one's financial affordability, true worthiness of an artist becomes little too hard to judge.

But to be frank, at a time when modern Bengali songs in our country have almost become synonymous with the stereotyped and often monotonous nature of songs performed by various musical bands mushrooming throughout the land, Rezaul Hasan Matin's collection of songs titled *Helen Bhengechhe Troy* (Helen destroyed Troy) comes to us as a refreshing and soothing tonic.

The cassette which is produced by Sound Track consists of a total of 14 songs, five of which are written, tuned and, of course, sung by Reza himself. The remaining nine songs are written by Kausar Ahmed Chowdhury, Khandaker Qamruzzaman, Golam Moshed Manik, Jashim Raihan, Khushir Rahman and M A Moid while music is directed by Tansen Khan.

Love and nostalgia remains to be the predominant theme in most of these songs. In the treatment of the love theme, the pain and suffering of the ultimate parting between lovers, reconciliation with the beloved and even a hope for winning the lost love back have featured in some of the songs. In such songs the extra-low key of the instrumentals was perfectly synchronised with that of the vocalists' rich voice. But in some, instrumental music had the upperhand over lyrics, which is not obviously expected of any song which wants to

convey its words to its listeners and as it always had been lyrics, that are the primary assets of Bengali songs or, for that matter, any song — have in some cases become secondary.

Some of the songs in the collection depict a sincere optimism about life in general. Especially *Duswapna Kete Gele* (waking from a nightmare), the last song in the collection, which is again written and tuned by the vocalist, is a song filled with optimism and a fitting one to end the collection with.

To say the least, this aspirant young artist who had received schooling from Hasan Abdur Rahman, Ostad Akter Sadmani, Ostad Zakir Hossain, Sheikh Lutfor Rahman, Abdul Latif, Dr Krishnapada Mandal and many others and sang at various national level programmes in front of foreign dignitaries like Perez de Cuellar, Li Peng, Benazir Bhutto, Mamoon Abdull Gayoom or Dr Mahathir Mohamad, did not take the decision to sing just as a whim. He obviously has melody in his throat and will in his heart — two components that often make a true singer.



Disorganised Thoughts

by Rushayed Ehsan Supal

Road Map

by Gazi Sadeq

When our future generation will walk their way We will not be there to pave their way

Should we not do something to fill the gap Let us leave a guideline through a good road map!

Far away My Lass Lives

by Akhtar Ahmad

Far away my lass lives Aging herself with household works I must see her soon Before it sets dusk

Birds fly to the horizon endless Spreading their wings at ease So are my disorganised thoughts—the way bubbles form in water and quickly disappear again. We proceed step by step: Now walking, now running, now staggering yet— We proceed whatever the pace is. Sometimes onward, sometimes backward. I weave my dreams — I weave and weave and weave, And I shall be weaving so. Those sweet dreams break into pieces Before my eyes when I see The poor slowly dying without food, The Third-World-baby reduced into skeleton. The chaotic sprinter to be a strumpet. Finding no way out of sheer poverty. Lovelessness in human love Ensnares bosoms with no heart underneath, perhaps— And the pitiable dentists Fatigued by mosquito-bite. The underdogs — to be sandwiched Between the wrath of capricious rulers And the bleak nuclear-winter ensuing, Maybe for generations to come.