



HAPPENINGS IN SPSU — —
AS WE SEE IT.

Once again the PAP moves to tighten the rein on critics and potential vocal groups. Indeed this is one of the striking characteristics of the PAP ruling party — its unceasing efforts to stifle any existing channels to voice out.

Following the series of repressions on progressive students movement, thru' both subtle and overt means, banning SPSU, the last of the autonomous students Union left in Singapore wrap up their case — to have students under their thumbs.

The Polytechnic Amendment Bill passed on 26th Feb '80 seeks only to ascertain that SPSU's future activities and finance shall all be a chip of the PAP block. All final say now goes to the Minister and to his board of appointees to govern Poly's affairs. Student say will be redundant in future in the provision of the new Constitution. This move is actually long awaited, in the attempt to ensure that all young Singaporean intellectuals toe the line drawn by the PAP.

Besides using the Minister and Parliament as the actors and stage for this act, the Poly administration is also made to play supporting role within the campus.

Within the campus, a publication (distributed free of charge to students) by the admin, emerged. The magazine's paper quality and letter settings were of high standard, reflecting the willingness to throw money to attract students. However the same cannot be said to the contents, though the stated objective of the magazine is the exchange of technical knowledge, amusingly the magazine (called PolyLink) carried articles to discredit the students' union and its leaders. One of the articles even went to the extent of selling the idea of doing away with Students' Autonomy and Academic Freedom. This is the kind of "Moral" education we, Poly students, are receiving.

As if "morally" speaking is not enough, we witnessed the intrusion of the head of department into students affairs. Making use of his position to instigate and mislead students is well reflective of the state of manipulation of the Polytechnic Administration in the attempt to stifle students. Yet, when students opposed to be puppets on the strings, they are accused of playing politics. Isn't this clearly the case of an arsonist who shouted fire to mask his evil deeds?

Obviously such actions contravene the very purpose of educating and broadening the outlook of the students to prepare them to be useful and progressive working force of our nation.

The press in its usual role, playing to the drums of the authority, published only wild innuendos and insinuations against the Union. These all are concerted efforts to fabricate and distort the Union's image, hoping only to justified its actions.

Immersed with illusion, the authority failed to realised that despite all their machineries, the truth cannot be blacked out from the people. For the truth is the invincible force of the people. The Amendment Bill may temporarily retard the progress of the students' movement to seek their identity and role in the society. However even with so much constraints the just-loving spirits in young people will prevail in the end. For

We are Human,
and we will feel for
what we see and hear
Act for what is right and just,
Speak against what is evil.
For,
We are not living digits
but warm blood humans against the cold
blue blooded autocrats.

Why Kill Our Rights
To Freedom Of Speech,
Thought, Decision,
& Action?!

STOP PRESS!!

Parliament Session on 26th February 1980

On the 26th Feb 1980 — a day before the start of the 1979/80 sessional examinations, the fate of our 20 years old Union was decided in the Parliament session. The present SPSU representing the interest of more than 8 000 students, is to be reconstituted when the Parliament with a turnout of 26 out of 69 MPs at the reading of the Polytechnic Amendment Bill, consecutively passed the 2nd and 3rd readings of the said Bill.

The manner in which the Parliament Session was carried out on that day invoked much detestations from our students who went, particularly when the Polytechnic Amendment Bill was read. Though hard pressed for time by the examination, some of us still managed to squeeze out some time to attend the Parliament session hoping to listen to a debate and obtain a clear explanation for the reconstitution of our Union. The Union had earlier sent letters to all Members of Parliament explaining our stand and opinions towards the proposed bill. Alas our hopes disintegrated! Though 65 out of 69 MPs turned up for the day's session, only 26 remained when the bill was read.

..... Cont'd on page 2.



..... Cont'd from page 1.

Dr. Ahmad Mattar, who moved the Bill, spoke on the manipulation of the Union by a small group of students for 'ideological and personal benefits' and the presence of friction between the Administration and the union as grounds for necessitating the reconstitution. He chose to cite the writing-off of a cumulative sum of bad and doubtful debts amounting to \$5624 as hint of possible corruption in the student's council. (But he conveniently ignored the fact that the debts dated as far back as 1972 and the previous council only took the initiative to have it written off in the last (79/80) Annual Report). The insinuation of manipulation is totally groundless as the SPSU Constitution clearly spells out that election to the council is open to every students. Should any discrepancy cropped up, the students are at liberty to have the Council removed.

The only other speaker on the Polytechnic Amendment Bill was Dr. Ang Kok Peng (MP for Buona Vista) who 'farted' nothing but appreciation for Dr. Ahmad Mattar's 'wise move'.

A number of other Bills which were read on that day received nonetheless the same kind of attention. Throughout the session, there was continuous movement in and out of the House by the MPs. If they were not dozing, they were either fidgeting or making exchanges of each other, with occasional outburst of laughter at wisecracks. It is disheartening to know that many bills having direct bearing in our lives were being passed in this manner by our people's representatives.



Editorial

Eversince the turning point of SPSU in 1974, she had been plagued by wave after waves of attempts to suppress her young and enthusiastic movement. The attempts, often carried out balantly and brutally, apparently had been exhausted and had failed to cow students activism before the choice of "banning" SPSU is made.

The unceasing persecution of students is indeed reactionary. And it only serve to reflect the myths and fallacies of our so-called democratic and "free" society.

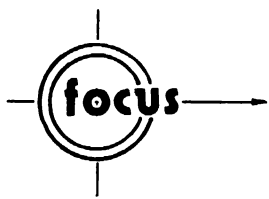
Due to the continuous pressure and the seemingly dark future of a "reconstituted" Union, some students might have been disillusioned and perhaps decided to pack up their bags and buried themselves in their books again. But the struggle of the students for a representatives voice and the warm and young spirits yearning for justices is far from over.

Realization of the ugliness of the system would in no way discourage us if we keep in mind our problem in the correct perspective and with correct mental frame work.

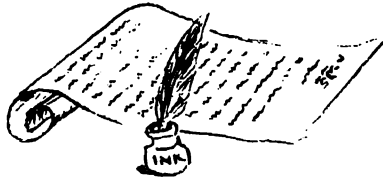
Despite the numerous obstacles and man-made constraints, the truth and justice will prevail. And we'll take this moment to salute to the struggle against oppression. — Long Live the Spirits of SPSU.

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**LETTER FROM SINGAPORE POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS' UNION HONORARY GENERAL SECRETARY TO DR. AHMAD MATTAR
MINISTER IN-CHARGE FOR POLYTECHNIC**



**Dr. Ahmad Mattar
Minister for Social Affairs,
Minister for Singapore, Polytechnic
Singapore**

Date 25.12.1979

Dear Sir,

We had read your proposal for the Singapore Polytechnic (Amendment) Bill with shock and were even more astounded when we were not even informed, not to say consulted, of such an important matter of which we believe must have been formulated by you for quite some time. Your proposal, which has sought to put the Union under the full control of you, had caused quite a stir in the student population. The Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union has for 20 years been and is still an autonomous, self-governing body, with full jurisdiction over its objectives, constitution, finance and activities. Your attempts made in empowering yourself with the right to control the students' Union and to define its objectives, constitution, finance etc. is in fact making a mockery of the meaning and concept of a students' union which outrightly belongs to no one else but we, students!

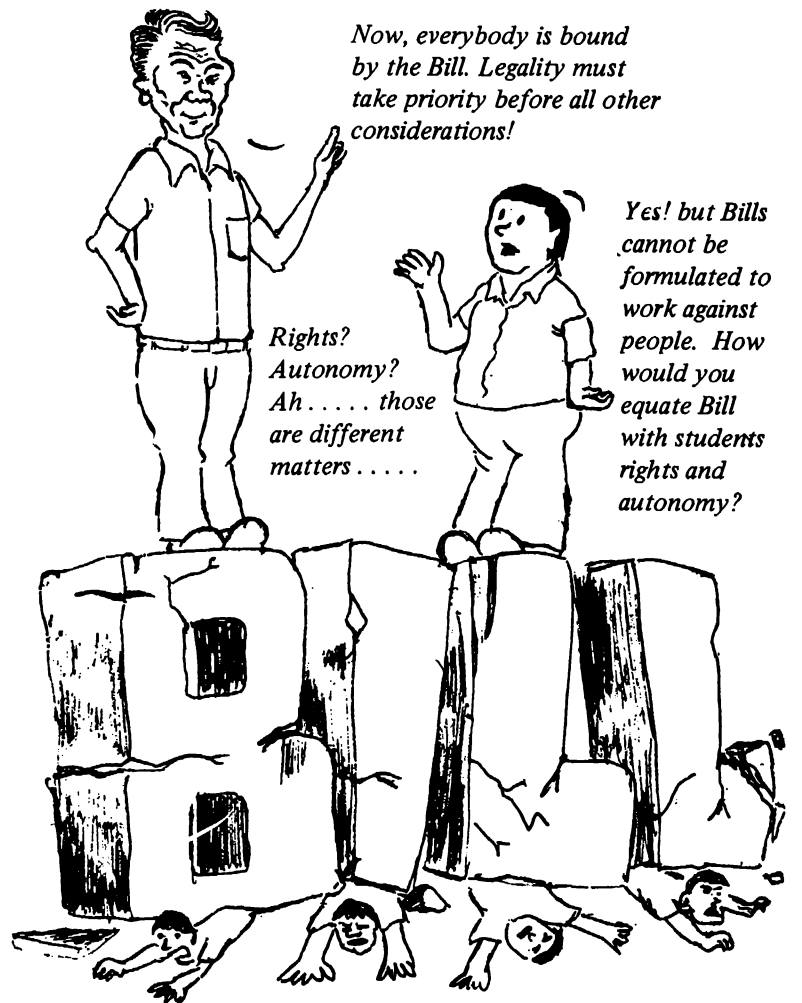
For 20 years of her existence, SPSU has been and is operating with the participation of students and had proven that students of this institution of higher learning know best what we want and are matured enough to question, criticise, analyse, express and change effectively. As it has so often been mentioned by many of our honourable ministers (you among one of them) that what Singaporeans need are such fine youthful qualities and spirits, we wonder why such a structure of our students' union which enables the shaping of these fine qualities should be cramped and replaced with one which we, students, are treated more as kids who cannot decide, ignorant of rights from wrongs and have to be fathered and spoonfed (by you).

Although you had not utter a single word regarding the reasons for making such a proposal, we are writing with hope that you, as Minister of Polytechnic, to reconsider and examine into the effects, pros and cons and the implications of your proposal.

Sir, if you can recall, in a speech at the Polytechnic Silver Jubilee Staff Dinner on 16.11.79, you had expressed your concern over the friction between the Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union and the Polytechnic Administration and had hoped that the problems can be resolved quickly so that the Administration can settle down to work and the students' body can spend their time usefully in pursuing technician education, developing leadership qualities and cultivating ideal work attitudes.

WE QUESTION:

- (1) Can the rift between the Polytechnic Administration and Students' Union be patched by just putting the Union under your administrative body? What will it reflect? -- The ugliness of the system for repression is a sign of weakness and subjugation of students' activities is something detestable in a democratic society.
- (2) Why is it that the causes of friction were not examined and problems not solved at its roots? Can friction be reduced if the interests of the students' union and the Polytechnic Administration do not coincide? Past history had depicted and reflected that the interest of the Administration is not to promote and support healthy students' activities organised, duplication of efforts, robbing the Union of a Union House, victimisation of students' leaders, the refusal to collect Union fees and many others are some of the outstanding deeds listed here. Can we be fooled into believing that these are done to help the Union progress and become stronger? The difference is clear -- The administration wants to control and dictate, students refused to be controlled and dictated for we, students, want our rights and autonomy.



- (3) Can leadership qualities be cultivated when students were treated as immatured kids, who were robbed of their rights to decide, lead, organise, express and act?
- (4) How can we, students, spend all our time usefully in pursuing our education when there is so much undying attempts made to mould us into digits, instead of adults?
- (5) Can we afford to be indifferent towards such attempts and let our future be determined by someone else instead of students ourselves?

These words will become empty words if they are not transformed into actions. In view of the truth, we have to point out the contradictory actions of yours. We cannot help but believe that this is another of the many repressive attempts made to kill the students' union -- a very subtle and blatant attempt indeed! Events after events had prove to us that the ultimate motive of you and your administrative body is to control. If you are not an ignorant man, you will have well discovered for yourself that this tragic proposal of yours does not benefit the students at all and as a matter of fact, is even more disastrous.

As it is still not too late, we hope that in the interest of Democracy, you will repeal your proposed Act which will only turn the Students' Union into an "Ahmad Mattar's" Union, the union being subjected to your dictatorship.

Your breathless coverage of the Act and unparliamentary behaviour of not even informing the students are viewed with seriousness as we believe that suppression of students can never be kept a secret.

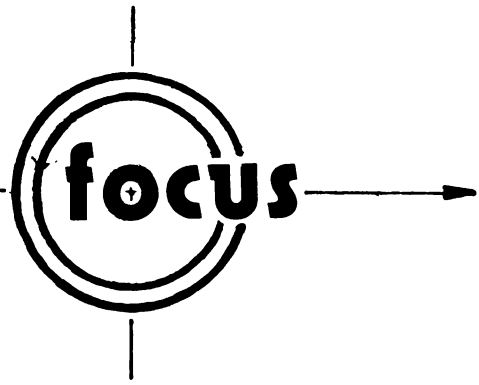
In view of the coverage and your surprising silence, we hope that you can meet all the students of Polytechnic at a Forum on 4.1.80 at 3.00 p.m. concerning your Proposed Amendment Bill if you are not afraid of meeting us. We also wish to hear from you your intention of making such a proposal. We, too, hope that through such a forum we can best understand each other's plight. We deeply appreciate an early reply and confirmation of your presence.

Thank You.

Yours in the Students' Solidarity,

Pak Geok Choo (Ms)
Hon. Gen. Sec.
20th Students' Council,
S.P.S.U.

C.c. All Poly Students



SPSU – Past Present Future

December 11, 1979, was a dark day for the Polytechnic students! During the Parliament sitting, an Amendment Bill to the present existing Singapore Polytechnic Act was proposed by the Minister in-charge of Polytechnic, Dr. Ahmad Mattar. This Amendment Bill seeks to dissolve the present Union and make way for a 'new union' to be constituted by regulations, to be set up by the Board of Governors of the Polytechnic. This Amendment Bill empowers the Board with complete control over the Constitution, objectives and finance of the new Union. It also states that the new Union will be made up of constituent bodies as may be prescribed by the regulations set up. In short, we students, are going to lose our rights to decide on how we are going to spend our funds. In other words, the present Union will be banned under the cloak of an Amendment Bill.

SPSU AND ITS PAST

SPSU was formulated in the early sixties. Though not as active as its Chinese educated counterparts in other institutions and secondary schools, it was nevertheless far from being an apolitical organisation. Since the mid-sixties, the intensive industrialisation programme of the PAP government had resulted in a depoliticisation process of the students and workers. With such a government policy, political expression was gradually reduced. By the late sixties, the Union had contented itself with activities within the narrow scope of the campus.

In 1974, the world recession and other crisis within and beyond Singapore sparked the revival of students' participation in social issues. It was at this period that student activism reached its peak. Below is a series of events which marks the awakening process of the students in Singapore:

*Anti-Bus Fare Hike Campaign

A 10 cents increase in busfare supported by the Ministry of Communication was implemented. USSU, SPSU, NUSU and NATSU launched a public petition to appeal against the hike.

*Bangladesh Flood Relief Campaign

A massive campaign was organised to collect donations in old clothings and cash for the relief of flood victims in Bangladesh.

*Tasek Utara Squatter Ussue

63 families of squatters had been forcefully evicted from their homes in Tasek Utara, outside Johore Bahru. USSU and SPSU protested against the act and collected donations for the victims.

*Retrenchment Research Centre

A wave of mass retrenchment hit Singapore. Malpractices were committed by many companies. SPSU assisted in publicising the Retrenchment Research Centre set up by USSU.

After the banning of USSU in 1976, SPSU launched another campaign to oppose the second busfare hike in July 1978. A petition was also initiated with over 10,000 signatories collected.

Following the banning of USSU, SPSU faced numerous problems in organising its activities. Initially, it had to slash its budget tremendously when the Administration refused to acknowledge the compulsory collection of Union fees as its obligation to the Union. Towards the end of the Seventies, its working space in the New Dover Road Campus was reduced severely. The Administration had also refused to co-operate by giving inconveniences to the Union when their assistance is required, beside imposing new campus regulations to restrict the activities of the Union. Attempts to sabotage and strangle SPSU even go to the extent of duplicating functions of the Union and instigating small band of students against the Students' Council. (SEE CIRCULAR ATTACHED).

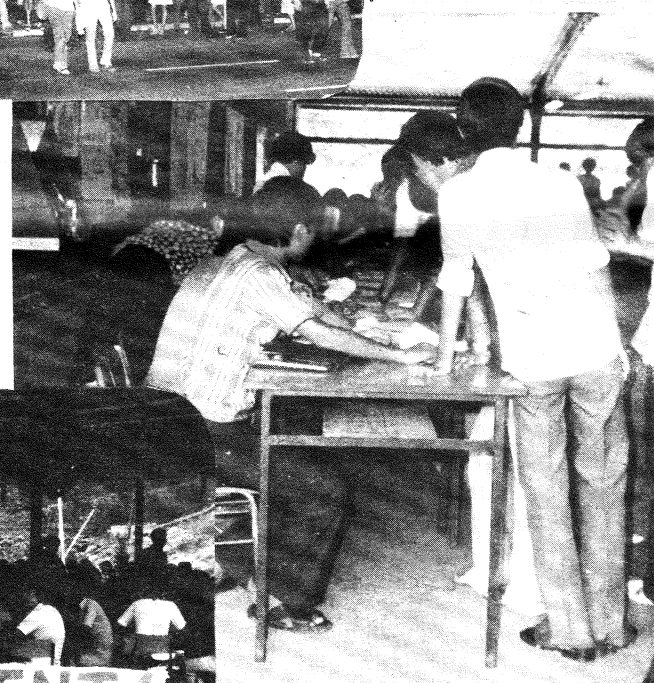
Amidst such repression, understandably the effectiveness of the Union was reduced. However, it is also far from being dead. Dedicated student leaders within the Union work harder against the constraints to improve the Union. Students' welfare is never neglected. Though with limited working place, the Union is still able to include cheap photocopy services, counters for the sale of cheap stationeries and the loaning of recreational equipments, besides other material benefits for the students. Many standing committees are activated to organise various forms of activities to enrich students' campus life. Regular publications with the objectives of instilling interests in social issues and social responsibilities were distributed to the students. The Union was therefore also an outspoken organisation with a socially orientated outlook. Indeed it is a heartening fact that such an outlook persists in solely technically inclined institution. Though at times, opinions raised concerning social issues may be limited in certain sense, it nevertheless, reflects the general feelings of the public on the many social issues.

Inspite the many speeches made by the members of Parliament stressing on the importance of students' concern in social issues, the Polytechnic Amendment Bill ironically serves only to further stifle the growth of students' consciousness.



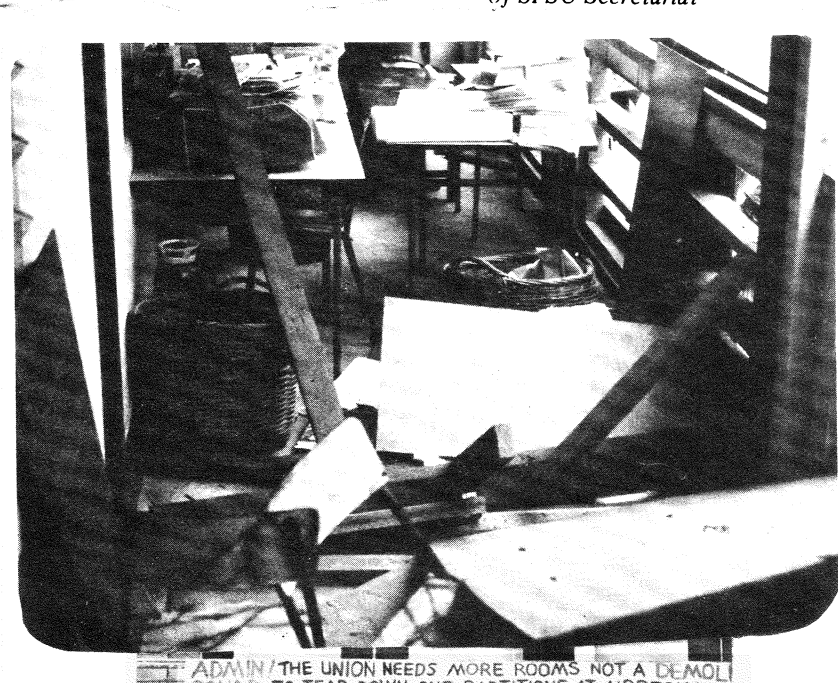
1. Anti Bus Fare Hike Forum

2. Petitioning against the fare hike

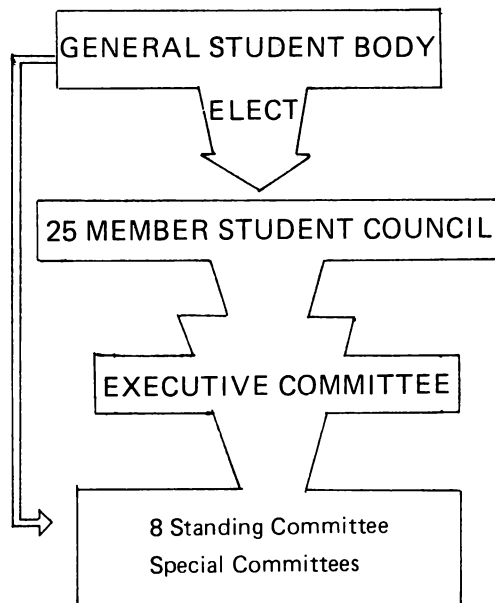


3. Collecting Donations

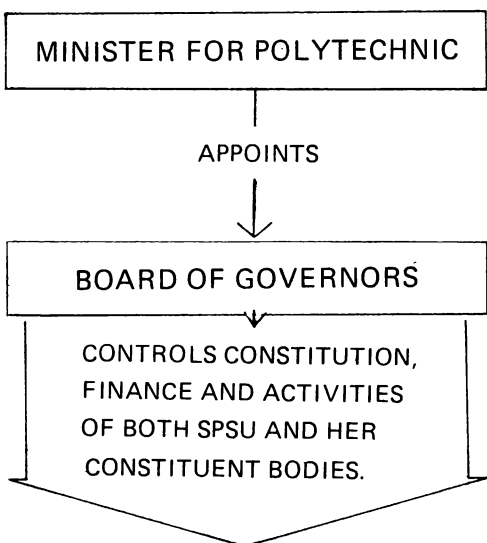
4. Physical destruction of SPSU Secretariat



PRESENT STRUCTURE OF THE UNION



STRUCTURE OF NEW 'UNION'



This structure is modelled after the showpiece, University of Singapore RECONSTITUTED Union, which have effectively restrict the Union and bring it under the authority paws.

THE FUTURE OF SPSU

What is in store for SPSU in the future does not seem to be bright. With the Amendment Bill, it can be seen that every effort is made to make SPSU helpless and ineffective.

PRESENT STRUCTURE OF THE UNION

SPSU was registered under the registry of societies (ROS) and is the legitimate body representing all students and thus has the role of fighting and catering for the rights of the students.

*The ultimate power lies with the whole student population.

*The Student Body each year elects a 25-member Students' Council.

The Students' Council makes policy and all the major decisions including the spending of the money. The Council's decisions can be easily reversed by majority vote of the Student Body in general meetings (AGMs and EOGMs). The Student Body hence check on the Council.

The 10-member Executive Committee (Ex-c0) are Councillors elected by the Council to carry out the policies and decisions of the Council. They have a special duty each and are helped by the Standing Committees.

In addition, there are affiliated societies semi-autonomous, having complete freedom over their own activities. They are also entitled to grant @ from the Union annually the sum being decided by the Council and then approved by the students at the Annual General Meeting.

STRUCTURE OF NEW "UNION"

In this structure, power is out of the students' hands and vested in the B.O.G. appointed by the Minister for Polytechnic, Dr. Ahmad Mattar. The B.O.G. will determine the Constitution of the Union and its constituent bodies. This includes the objectives of each organisation which the Administration can now alter at will.

The B.O.G. also controls the finances of the 'Union' and clubs giving it the power to withhold funds from activities and issues not to their likings. eg. if they decide to impose an increase in tuition fees, they would refuse the money needed (eg. publications, banners etc.) for the carrying out of the issue against the increase.

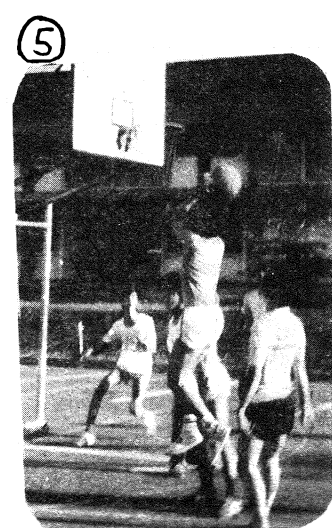
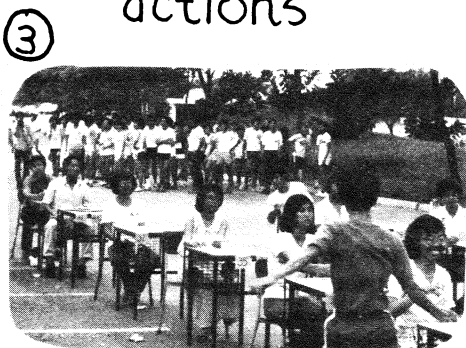
@Footnote: Grants were given to the affiliated societies before the stoppage of compulsory collection of Union fees. However after the stoppage of collection, SPSU had stopped giving grants to the affiliated societies due to the financial in capabilities.

CONCLUSION

It is regretful that at such time when the government is beginning to inform the people the lack of future leaders in our country, Dr. Ahmad Mattar had chosen to propose an Amendment Bill which would restructure the Union. Will it not further stymie the progress of Singapore students in developing independence of thoughts and capability in self-decision? Moreover, the restructuring of the Union in itself manifest the high-handed and paternalistic ways of the authorities in dealing with mature students of our society. This is indeed an ironical move for a government which claimed itself to be democratic and open.

We believe that this issue does not merely concerns the students in Polytechnic. It reflects a general policy of the government in dealing with the problems in our society. It is therefore closely linked with the future of our problems in our society. It is therefore closely linked with the future of our Singaporean students and youngsters. Are we able to produce questioning and brave individuals individual who are capable of sacrificing themselves for the benefits of the society? Is the government persistent in pursuing its present policies? Will they churn our mere consuming digits with helpless submissive individualistic outlook? It is undoubtedly everybody's bussiness to be concerned of this crisis.

Captured!
SPSU's
young spirits
in
actions



1. Bookfair
2. Concert for the new students
3. Poly 50 relay in campus

4. Hike
5. Basketball Tourney

Death of Democracy

The law, instead of protecting the rights of citizens had been abused and used as a means of effective political control by the PAP government. Barely four years since the arbitrary and undemocratic banning of the University of Singapore Students' Union, the same sentence is slapped on SPSU, the only autonomous Students' Union left in the island.

USSU was then an active Students' Union, truly working towards identifying with the masses of Singapore. Seeing their interests threatened, the authority used "law" to killed the young and growing movement of the students in the tertiary institutions.

Their lame excuses were:

1. USSU was controlled by foreign students.
2. There was corruption and misuse of Union funds.
3. USSU has carried out anti-establishment activities.

Though all these allegations were proven untrue and refuted, the Bill was passed to restructure USSU amidst much protest from the students and the public.

11th Dec. '79 another similar bill seeking to stamp out the last of the trueful representation of students, is introduced in the Parliament by Dr. Ahmad Mattar, the Acting Min. of Social Affairs — PAP political goal of an autocratic rule.

Though the "operation SPSU" is to be expected (given the authoritarian nature of the government), the blatantness and subtlety is one which is unparallel in comparison.

The coverage by the press on the issue was both vague and meagre. To date no reasons, not even excuses, were put forth for this arbitrary move. The Bill if passed (scheduled of 26th Feb.) would reconstitute SPSU into a Ahmad Mattar's Union, or rather a PAP's students' Union, ruled through the Poly administrator, the Board of Governors. We, students, would lose our final say (which we are enjoying now) in our finance, activities and constitution, at the time of our final term examination.

Whatever weak and stupid excuses whipped up to mask their unjust and undemocratic act later on, the contemptible actions must be expose and laughed at and the struggle for democracy will go on.

We must learn from Old USSU.

Christopher Chen

The introduction of the Bill to amend the Polytechnic Act, by Ahmad Mattar, Acting Minister of Social Affairs, has sought to reduce our autonomous Union status into one like that of the Prefectorial Board in the secondary schools. In the new structure, the supreme power is in the hands of the Minister himself. He shall decide what our constitution shall be, how our finance shall be run and what activities we shall have. Surely we do not need a 'father' of this sort!

The basic essence of a students Union in the tertiary institutions is to have a true representation of students which can stand for our interest. They must be on the same ground with the administration of Poly in order to safeguard our interests effectively. To reduce our Union into a "baby" is simply outrageous!

Whatever sweetener any honey the Admin. may give to cover up and to cool down the opposing sentiments initially, the fact remains that the Board of Governors, by their nature are pure administrators taking directives from above and they can never fully represent the students' interests.

A flashback of their past records would clearly show their main concern and to whom they are serving:

Case 1: In 1972, the Admin. adamantly evicted a few hundreds Polytechnic students from the Prince Edward Campus (Shenton Way) to make way for the Engineering Faculty of hundreds Polytechnic students from the Prince Edward Campus (Shenton Way) to make way for the Engineering Faculty of University of S'pore, totally disregarding the criticism and protests from the students. The unlucky students found themselves landed up in a shabby ill facilitated old army camp as their new campus. Not even a pleasant name like Princess Mary Campus could cover up the deplorable environment and the uproar of the students. And it is through collective action (a demonstration) called by the Union, that the Admin. is committed to renovate the campus to make it more conducive for studying.

Case 2: In 1975, the Admin. tried to implement the policy of kicking out the first year failures (this was a new policy then). However the 74/75 Polytechnic prospectus did not state the change in Policies. Many students found their academic career ruined because of the sudden switch in policy. Some of the students did not pass because of medical reasons, but they were not spared by the bureaucrats. The Union took up the case and managed to force the Admin. to accept most of the students who were unfairly treated by the Admin.

The records are numerous, but I hope the above examples are convincing enough to reflect the nature of the Admin. and whom they are serving.

Who is Ahmad Mattar in Polytechnic? We surely don't need a Political Party to control our Union. We definitely are old and matured enough to decide for ourselves. The move to control and subvert our Union is undemocratic and such dictatorial attitude must be condemned and opposed.

Lye May

International Support

From:

KOREAN STUDENTS COMMITTEE IN JAPAN.

TELECOMMUNICATION AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE

KSCJ EXPRESSES SUPPORT TO SPSU'S STRUGGLE FOR DEFENDING INDEPENDENT STUDENTS' ACTIVITIES UPHOLDING PRINCIPLE OF SELF-RELIANCE SELF-DETERMINATION
KSCJ
COL NIL

JISU STRONGLY AGAINST GOV'T CONTROL SPSU. LIKE TO GIVE EVERY POSSIBLE SUPPORT.
JAPAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT UNION

From:

HONGKONG FEDERATION OF STUDENTS

TELECOMMUNICATION AUTHORITY OF SINGAPORE

HKFS SHOWS GREAT CONCERN TO AMENDMENT BILL ON SPSU PLS BE SURE OUR SUPPORT OF STUDENT RIGHTS AND AUTHONOMY DETAILS FOLLOW
HKFS
COL SINGAPORES
HKFS SPSU

AS A SUPPORT SPSU STRUGGLE FOR FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE AWAITING BILL DETAILS FOR CIRCULATING AMONG MEMBERS SECRETARIAT ASIAN STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

SCENES IN THE CAMPUS

Less Say for S.U. Students

On 22nd Nov. 1979, the Singapore University administration made a shocking announcement: the Accountancy and Business Administration Faculty would be shifted from the Bukit Timah Campus to the Kent Ridge Campus in ten days time and on commencement of the new session in mid 1980, they would again be moved to the Nanyang University. No rationale of the move was given. The implementation would affect more than 1000 students in the Faculty.

Irrked by the Admin.'s high handed treatment, more than 700 students petitioned against the "irresponsible and disrespectful manner in which they evicted" from their Bukit Timah Campus. The students were seeking for an open forum with the University's admin.

Viewing from the series of events since '78, from the announcement of the Joint Campus Scheme, the related issues *to the medical Bond Issue, It seem that students in the Singapore University are getting lesser and lesser say in the academic life. Academic freedom has become something sacred and unheard of in the campuses in Singapore.

(source: US(R) SU)

*16/7/78 - forcefully removable of USSU from its Union House in Bukit Timah campus. CISCO guards were deployed.

1/12/78 - banning USSU and all SU clubs and societies from holding activities in the Bukit Timah Campus.

**The government slapped a five years bond on the Medical students in addition to the 1 year housemanship and two year national service upon graduating. The issue sparkled much annoyance and protest from the students and public.

SUBVERSION UNMASKED

Exposed! - The acting Head of Marine Department of S'pore Polytechnic, Cheng Huang Leong, was caught distributing handbills to his students during lecture time, instigating them to go against the Students Union!

Capitalising on the ignorance of some students, the bespectacled man (Cheng) manipulated with figures to sow doubts on the students of the Union's previous year account. He even went to the extent of organising a petition, requesting the students council to hold an EOGM (Extra Ordinary General Meeting).

The EOGM was convened on the 24th Jan '80. More than 500 students attended. Cheng and a few other admin. staff including the Deputy Registrar (Tan Boo Hock) were outside the meeting premises. Mr. Cheng was found mobilising and "advising" on a small group of students outside the MLT (which the EOGM was in progress.)

However, motions tabled (reportedly drafted by Cheng himself) during the meeting seeking to embarrass the students Council was defeated.

The press as usual seized the opportunity, insistently reported distorted news to discredit the Union. Following the happening in SPSU closely, it is not hard for one to see a concerted plot against the Union by the authority to justify the passing of the Amendment Bill to ban the Union. (See attached circular to students by the 20th Students' Council).

Uncertainty over Nanyang University's Future

14 lecturers and the deans of the Art Faculty from the Nanyang University have tendered their resignation. Though a certain staff turn over should be expected in any University, such high rate certainly underlined the low morale among the Nanyang staff. The main cause of their consideration is reported to be insecurity and job dissatisfaction evolved from the uncertainty of the Nanyang University's future.

Indeed Nanyang today was a shadow of its former self. In '60s, it was the pride of the people. In fact, it was through the contributions of thousands of people from all walks of life that Nanyang was built and maintained. However, following rapid social and economical development in Singapore and the emphasis of English as the official language and the government's move to radically reform Nanyang, her graduates are now rated second to those of the Singapore University in the employment market. Some graduates even have to give tuition to survive.

It is no wonder that the students are frustrated and worry over the future of the University. In their recent statement by the Students' union the student voiced out for the survival of Nanyang. It called for the University Admin. to put more effort in upgrading the University's prestige and image.

(source: ST 8/2, 29/2, 30/2)

DEDICATED TO THE YOUNG SPIRITS IN SPSU

Don't Despair
When you realise things are unfair
Cause there are people who care
For the truth that you bare.

Look how they fare
When USSU they did not spare
People they failed to scare
For more became aware.

With SPSU left for them to tear
An amendment they declare
For truth and critic they could not bear
So autonomy and democracy becomes rare.

Don't fret and swear
The truth you seek would glow and glare
Unceasingly the actions you dare
With youthful spirits to carry on and air
For the truth must be shared
With all people everywhere.



INTRODUCING

(11) Disciplinary Commission

Mr. Ara Nair moved that this Council sets up a Commission of Inquiry into allegations made against 3 members of the Council.

- (1) Mr. Amarjit Singh — involved in a cut taken from the table football.
- (2) Mr. Mathews Verghese — dispensing of the old President's Chair for \$7.
- (3) Mr. Tan Boo Hock — for taking two chairs home.

Motion was seconded by Mr. Amarjit Singh.
 There were no objections. Chair declared the motion carried.
 The Council subsequently went on to elect the Commission of Inquiry.

*Footnote

(excerpt from minutes of 6th EOCM, USSU 23rd Students' Council)

- Name** : Tan Boo Hock
- Position Held** : Deputy Registrar, Singapore Polytechnic
- Responsibility** : Students' Affairs
- Relevant experience** : Assistant Honorary General Secretary, 23rd Students' Council of the University of Singapore Students' Union.
 The executive committee (Exco) in which Mr. Tan was in was dissolved by the 23rd Students Council (obviously a better name than a Vote of No-Confidence on the Exco) on the 4th EOCM on 30.12.69.
- Belief** : Non-believer of Students' Autonomy in Campus.
 : Non-believer of Academic Freedom.
- Achievements** : (1) believed to have master-minded the recent EOGM.
 (2) give instructions to take down and confiscate the Union's banners.
 (3) gave lecture on Students' Politics to a group of students during a Leadership Training Programme in which he slandered SPSU leaders and instigated them to form a new Sports Council to oppose the Students' Union's sporting wing (Singapore Polytechnic Sports Council).
 (4) Instigated a group of students to pester Union leaders for loaning of the Union van for a disco night function.

(Note: the Union only grants loan of Union van to societies for their functions)

US REPORT ASSESS HUMAN RIGHTS IN ASIA COUNTRIES.

THE ASIAN WALL STREET JOURNAL
 Distributed Thursday, February 7, 1980

Singapore

Regarding Singapore, the State Department noted that "public criticism of the government tends to be circumspect although there is virtually no formal censorship." It said torture is prohibited although individual instances of mistreatment by law enforcement officers have been alleged. While noting that the government has denied allegations of torture, the department noted reports by Amnesty International that it had obtained evidence of physical and psychological torture.

The State Department said the government "makes use of detention without trial in security and some criminal cases, including those involving organized secret society crime, under the internal security act and the criminal (detention) law."

The State Department said "freedom of speech, press and assembly are curtailed in several areas. The government forbids activities or public statements that might arouse communal tensions between the dominant Chinese and the Malay or Indian minorities. In addition, assemblies of five or more persons in a public place, including Singapore, societies and clubs with more than 10 members must have a permit." And it noted that to operate legally in Communist political activity is proscribed, and registration is denied to those with triad (Chinese secret society) rituals. The department said, adding that the definition of "security cases" is "sufficiently broad that it has the effect of tending to stifle radical dissent."

THE STRAITS TIMES, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1980

S'pore's rating in the report

By MILTON CHASE
 Our Washington correspondent

WASHINGTON, Wed. — The annual US State Department assessment of human rights around the world yesterday rated Singapore highest in the human and civil rights field among non-communist nations of South-east

Freedom

The extent of freedom of thought, speech, press, religion and free assembly also are rated. The report said there were some flaws in Singapore's human rights situation. These included instances where defendants were denied fair, open trials.

The report said: "The Singapore Government has a deserved image of unbending honesty and exceptional efficiency. Its achievements in assuring the well-being of its people are internationally recognised. The standard of living is rising steadily and is now the second highest in Asia (after Japan)." The annual assessment required by Congress, evaluates each country in the world on its freedom from torture, cruel and degrading punishment, arbitrary arrest and detention; and denial of a fair public trial.

Although the report pointed out that there had been little evidence of communal tensions or terrorist incidents in recent years, it said that Singapore continues to cite the threat of insurgency and the possibility of renewed communal strife as justification for the Internal Security Act.

Vivala
 Difference!



PHILIPPINES

Police Disrupts Cebu People's Rally on Human Rights

People from different sectors and classes gathered in Cebu City, in Central Philippines to commemorate the 31st Anniversary of the ratification and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on Dec. 15, 1979.

After a mass rally with songs replete with nationalist aspirations and speeches, the people started marching towards Fuente Osmena inviting many onlookers on the way.

Not long after the marchers began another rally at Fuente Osmena, an official of Philippines Constabulary, Lt. Col. De Guzman gave the people five minutes to disperse and go home because according to him the rally was illegal due to lack of a permit.

Not long after, the military ruthlessly attacked the people -- firetrucks directed their fire hoses at them with high pressured ice-cold water.

When the people tried to cross the street after deciding to march back to the starting place, a car blocked the way and plainclothes men grabbed at a priest and tried to force him inside the car. A fellow priest came to the rescue and was also taken.

Upon being informed that the priests were in the hands of the Integrated National Police (INP), the people marched to the INP Ramos station. The INP men were confused and finally decided to unburden themselves by releasing the arrested priests because of the insistence of the people.

This ruthless attack on the people peacefully gathering in order to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights barred the coercive and aggressive nature of the present martial law regime. It became more obvious to the people that the present regime is determined to suppress their struggle for true democracy and national sovereignty.



6,000 people join Cebu Human Rights Crusade on Dec., 15, 1979

KOREA

Korean Political Prisoners' Families Appeal to U.N.

A group of families of Korean political prisoners who were resident in Japan but have been detained in South Korea left Japan on January 7th to visit various international organizations for human rights including the U.N. Human Rights Committee and Amnesty International to appeal to them for help in getting the prisoners released. Among the group in Son Sun-Yun, wife of Choi Chil-gyo, who had been living in Chiba prefecture but was arrested when he visited South Korea in 1974 on a charge of being a spy for North Korea, and was sentenced to death. A group of lawyers in Tokyo investigated the case and found out that Choi had a verifiable alibi for the period when he was supposed to have visited North Korea (according to the case made by South Korean Army Security Command Headquarters against him.)

His wife Ms. Son, learning of the death sentence on him, began appealing for his release, even staging a hunger strike in Tokyo with her children. A group supporting Choi Chil-gyo was formed and many activities to save him are being taken.



Military

U. S. Marines Stage Big Maneuvers in South Korea

While Iran and Afghanistan were drawing international attention, 4,000 troops belonging to the U.S. 3rd Marine Division stationed in Okinawa began large scale maneuvers in South Korea.

Called the MAGEX 80 the maneuvers began on January 4th and are based on the assumption that a regional war has broken out on the Korean peninsula. Helicopter troops, an artillery unit, a logistical support unit and a communication unit were mobilized and various ground and air operations with live ammunition are scheduled to continue until the middle of February in the suburb to the Northeast of Seoul.

Since the assassination of President Park Chung Hee, conflicts within the South Korean military continue and the current maneuvers also aim at re-strengthening U.S. military control to prevent any coup-like actions like the one taken by South Korean front line troops on December 12th without prior notice to the U.S. forces stationed in South Korea. It is also part of the U.S. military plan to reinforce the system of quick mobilization to areas of conflict, which was worked out as part of U. S. military strategy for the 80's.

Japan's Self Defence are not officially participating but since January 4th SDF planes have been taking off and landing with increase frequency at SDF bases in various area.

THAILAND

SLUMS

In the heart of "Rice Bowl of S.E. Asia", people trickled from some 71 provinces of Thailand for Bangkok. Leaving their home where lives had been hard in Bangkok, they hoped they could find a better life.

With limited paper qualification, selling labour is the main means of survival; often for a meagre income of about \$100 to \$200 a month. The cost of living is comparatively higher than in the province they came from and renting a humble flat is often not within their reach (The minimum rental alone quoted could often be as much as their monthly income!). As a result, many resort to their own means to find a roof for themselves: pieces of wood were gathered around the Port of Thailand and built into shacks. This became their home, which is known as "slums" to others.

The living conditions is appalling. The huts are all very closely built and surrounded by rubbish heaps and stagnant pools of black waste water without proper drainage system. An offensive smell would greet you if you go near it. In this condition, they lived for 8 - 9 years, then they were told that that it was illegal squatting. We were told that of the 7,000 residents, two to three thousands had been evicted. The deplorable conditions was certainly unfit for any residential purposes, but these slum dwellers had no other choice. The government had allotted flats to those being evicted from the area. However, the rentals were too high for these people. Often they could not pay up their rent and in turn evicted from their flats. And the slums area was their last resort again.

Due to the failure of the government to alleviate their deteriorating conditions, the residents there had grouped themselves up and a committee had been elected to fight for their rights - the rights to live and survive.



technocrat reporter

Speak Mandarin Campaign

The declining economic and social status of Mandarin, ever since the rule of PAP has long been recognised as a fact by Singapore Chinese. Inevitably, the 'Speak Mandarin Campaign' launched by our Prime Minister on the 7th Sept '79 was viewed with scepticism by some people as this was seen to contradict the precedent policy. In view of this controversy, we had made an attempt to gather opinions pertaining to this subject. For a better understanding of the views reflected below, a brief summary of the official reasons of promoting the language is also accompanied:

- 1 The complex linguistic heterogeneity of the Chinese society in Singapore hinders effective communication and integration among the same ethnic group.
- 2 The learning workload of bilingualism of our youngsters can be lightened.
- 3 Mandarin will play an important role in the impending trade with China.



I think it is a good idea to have a unified language among the Chinese especially when Mandarin is being recognised as one of the international languages. But I feel that it is too sweeping a statement to conclude that dialectal difference hinder effective communication among the same race because this will be true only if the Chinese understand only one dialect and no other dialects or languages. This is not the case in real life.



I'm not against the campaign, but I still prefer to preserve my identity and roots to which I belong to by being able to speak my dialect. I feel it is more intimate to speak dialect with my family and relatives.

It is a fact that the Mandarin of the Chinese society is deteriorating both in popularity and standard. By encouraging us to "Speak More Mandarin and Less Dialect" it seems to imply that the present state is a consequence of speaking dialect. This is not true! The present phenomenon is a result of the over emphasis of English and negligence of Mandarin at the same time. It is a natural outcome of precedent policy pursue by the government in the economy and education.



I do not like the way Singapore Broadcasting Corporation moves to dub the Cantonese shows. Totally disregarding public opinions. Surely this way of doing things ain't going to help the matter very much.



I doubt that there will be additional burden to children if home speak dialect because dialect is what one picks up from young. We do not have to 'learn' it.

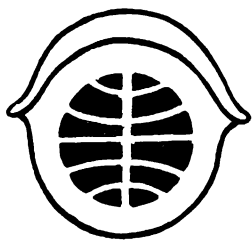


The campaign is aimed at reducing illiteracy in Singapore in the light of the government's philosophy. Until recently the average failure rate in the P.S.L.E. was an astounding 50%. These mainly from the lower income group, which formed about 70% of the population, mostly come from dialect-speaking background. Of these, 80% enrolled in English medium schools and there is a marked difference in general knowledge, political awareness, frequency of newspaper reading and ability to articulate ideas as compared to the Chinese stream primary school dropouts.

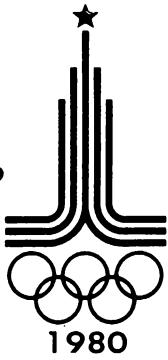
Due to the linguistic similarity of Mandarin to the dialects, many of the Chinese educated usually have a higher level of literacy and have greater access to newspaper books, TV or magazines. The "Speak Mandarin Campaign" is thus in line with the policy of 'bilingualism' that is, English plus the mother tongue for the "ideal Singaporean"* and at least Mandarin for the 'less able' Singaporean, to prevent wastage of manpower, perhaps?



* "a people fluent in English and thus in step with the world of science and technology but also steeped in the Asian values of thrift, discipline and industry that come with knowledge of their mother tongue."



CAN OLYMPICS AND POLITICS BE SEPARATED?



- Charlie -

What's Politics? What's Olympics?

From the abstract meaning of the two words, we can define politics and the Olympics as two totally unrelated things but we know that looking at things in this way is not scientific. We must probe into the realities of this problem.

Historical Clue

The Olympics has 88 years of history and the history of Olympics can therefore give us some clue to our "mystery" In 1916, while the preparation for the 6th Olympics games has already been completed in Berlin, the German army invaded Belgium and France. This erupted the First World War and also prevented the 6th Olympic Games from being carried out. Obviously you won't expect the French and German sportsman to peacefully compete each other while their brothers are engaged in deadly battles in the war front. This can very clearly show us that the Olympics cannot be dissociated from politics.

Due to the disastrous effect of the 1st World War the 7th Olympics saw the raising of the 5 rings flag which symbolises the peaceful cohesion of the 5 continents. However the five rings flag did not save the 12th Tokyo Olympics from being cancelled due to the second World War. Of course you don't expect the Chinese sportsmen to compete with the Japanese when their countries had been invaded and their fellow countrymen killed in millions by the Japanese Imperial soldiers. Yes, once and again, Olympics was affected by politics. The People's Republic of China was established in 1949 and 40 Chinese sportsmen attended the 1952 Olympics. However, in 1956, International Olympics Committee accepted Taiwan participate in the Olympics under the name of Nationalist Republic of China. The Chinese saw that this would create a confusing situation of two China and therefore withdraw from the I.O.C. Now let us ask, who is actually playing with Politics.

From the above we can see that the Olympics has always been determined by politics and these are two inseparable things.

National Flags! National Songs!

Now, let us look at some of the Political activities of the Olympics. During the opening ceremony of the Olympics, the sportsmen of the various countries march in proudly with their national flag. Now, are they representing individual or are they representing their countries? If they are representing their country, then what can it be if it is not politics? During the prize giving ceremonies, if the national anthem, accompanied by the raising of the national flags, do not symbolise politics then what does it symbolise? Some people claim that "Olympics was organised to promote peace" Now, even if we assume that this is the genuine aim, can we say that this very aim itself is not a political aim?

Do you support racism?

Since the Olympics itself is a political activity, our next question would be: Is the politics governing the Olympics good or bad? If it is good then we should support, otherwise, we should oppose it. In the last Olympics there were mainly two political questions:

1. Can the so-called "Nationalist China" represent the Chinese people to participate in the Olympics?
2. Should the I.O.C. permit New Zealand, a country (which have sporting interactions with racist South Africa), to take part in the Olympic Games?

Now let us look into the problems:

1. The fact that Taiwan is a part of China is recorded in history is irrefutable. Now can the U.S.A. and other countries expect China to be represented by 2 different teams? How can the representatives from the state of Taiwan represent the 800 million Chinese people? If these are not bad politics then what is it?
2. Racism are rejected by people all over the world and S.Africa is one country where extreme racism was one of the government's policy. Many places for example, hotels, toilets, buses, parks etc. are exclusively for whites. If a black happened to be found in these place then he would be jailed if he could reach the police station alive. However, let us ask: who are the ones who mine the S.African Gold and Diamond? Who are the creators of S.Africa's wealth? - The blacks.

Thus when Soviet troops swept into Afghanistan, the opinion against it was vehement. Immediately retaliatory actions were announced especially from U.S. One of them was to boycott the coming 22nd Olympic to be held at Moscow in July. This again sparkles a number of varied opinions and debate on politics and Olympics. Though I.O.C. has voted that the game to be on, many countries had expressed that they would be boycotting the game in protest of Soviet troop in Afghanistan.

Cont'd on page 12.

THE RUSSIAN BEAR MOVES SOUTH

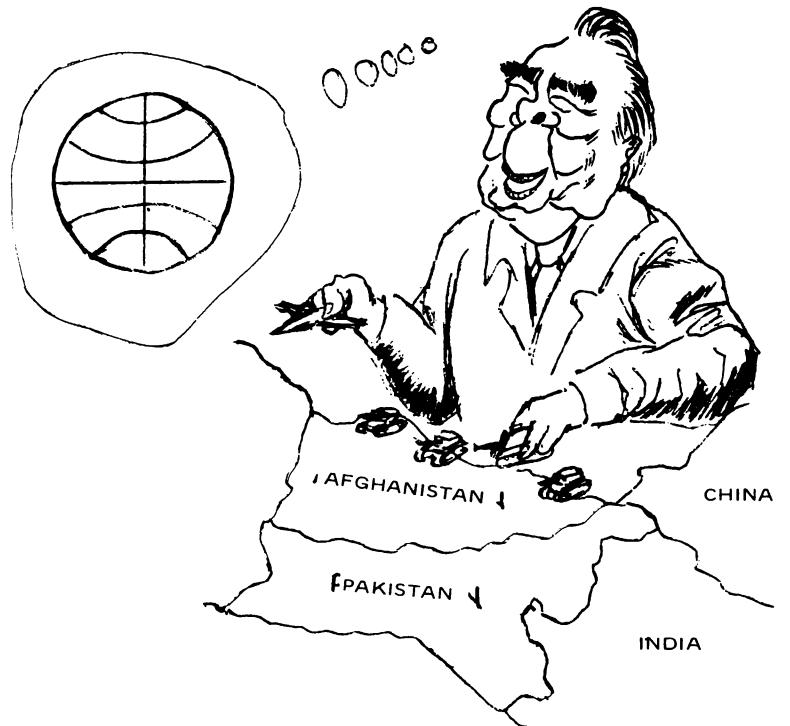
- OSMAN -

Following the Christmas presents of massive military aid and the coup against Hafizulla Amin, the Soviet has now committed more than 100,000 troops in Afghanistan in the war against the Islamic rebels and mullahs in the strategically important Afghanistan. Until now, Soviet military aid to Kabul had been confined to only military advisers, military pilots, military commanders and hardware specialists rather than its combat troops. The turn of event, clearly reflects the declining control of the Kabul regime over its population and the rising anti-Soviet sentiments in the people. Massive defection from the Afghan government military force to the rebels are reported. Many Russians found the streets unsafe for them with the growing number of Russians being assassinated.

However, why did Moscow take the risks of damaging economics consequences and diplomatic setbacks in its invasion into Afghanistan?

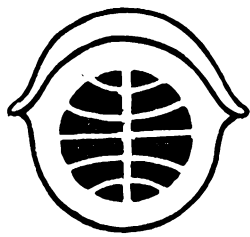
Clearly its policy of global expansion is not dictated by just one factor or two. and it is generally believed that the few contributing factors are:

- 1) With the growing Islamic rebellion against the Kabul regime, Moscow feared the Islamic sentiments generated by Iran might eventually overthrow the friendly regime in Afghanistan and the replacement of another Islamic republic. This has strong implication for Soviet as she has a long common border with these countries and a 50 million odd Muslim population.
- 2) Soviet has long been aiming to acquire a warm water port in the Indian Ocean and a strangling hold on the Arabian Sea which is the life line of the Industrialised Western Europe. The grip on Afghan is part of the chain of planned moves to establish Soviet hegemony in the area.
- 3) As the "advanced" countries dependence on oil and raw material of the third world increase, the Middle East, with its vast reserve of oil and other raw materials, becomes projected into a prominent position. The need to secure these raw materials had created the challenge in gobbling for sphere of influence. With anti-American sentiment spreading in the wake of the Iranian revolution. Moscow wasted no time in extending its doctrine of limited sovereignty outside Eastern Europe.



With one foot caught in Iran, the invasion into Afghanistan is indeed a slap on U.S. Hastily, the U.S. administrator declared various retaliatory actions such as using economic sanction of USSR, seeking for a military bases in the region, armament support for Pakistan etc. However, the effectiveness of such actions leave much to be desired. Some of the Western countries and Japan, though voicing condemnation for the Soviet invasion are reluctant to participate in the proposed economic sanction, fearing to antagonise their own economies. And with the rising tide of nationalism in the Third World countries, seeking military bases would indeed be a tough problem.

On the other hand, the world has responded to Soviet invasion with much indignation. Massive demonstrations occurred everywhere for the pride of the Afghan people. And one fact remains clear; that the future of Afghanistan remains in the people of Afghanistan. Already the struggle for independence has intensified.



HARVEST, BUT NO CASH

On January 23rd 1980, about 10 000 farmers in Kedah (the padi state of Malaysia with the largest population of farmers) staged a demonstration outside the state Secretariat Building in Alor Star. The farmers were discontented with the price that they were given by the National Padi Authority (LPN). They were demanding for an increase of their padi price to \$40 per pikul (60.5 kg).

Government Shocked

The large turnout for the protest was so significant that it came as a rude shock to the government. (This was the biggest mass protest after the Baling Hunger March in 1974 in which 13 000 hungry peasants protested against increasing prices of essential goods and the falling rubber prices. Many were unable to feed their families and on the brink of starvation.)

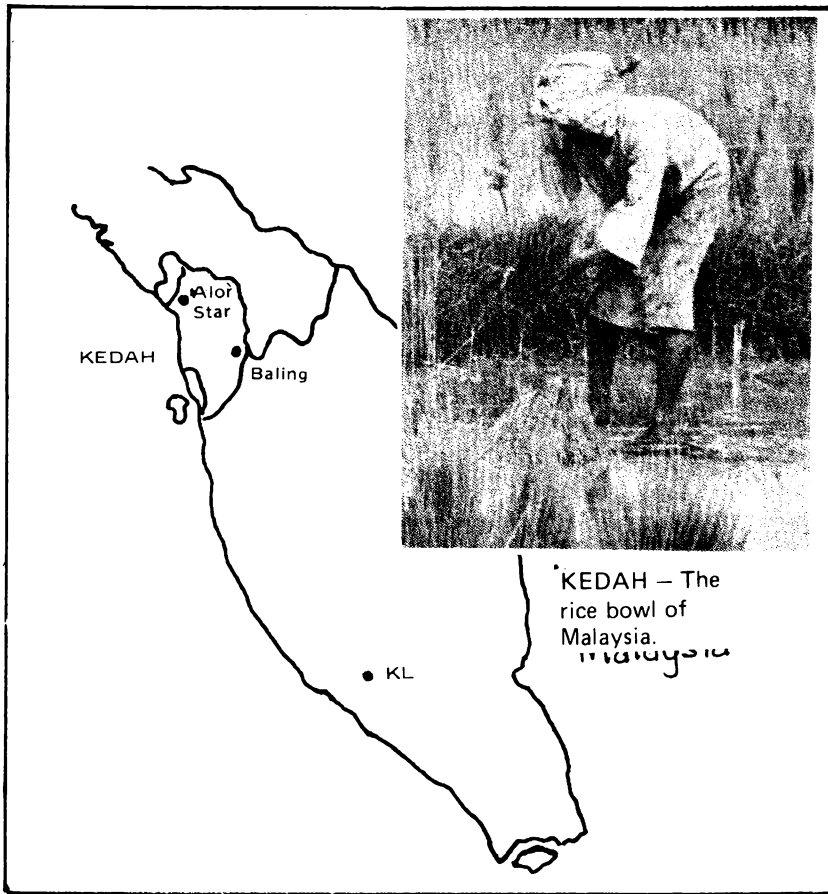
. and Reaction

As usual, instead of listening to the grievances of the farmers, police and riot squads were called in. Tear gas and batons were used to disperse the protesting farmers. 92 participants were arrested and subsequently charged for rioting. A curfew was clamped onto the city. Government officials were also quick to denounce and dismiss the protest as groups of discontented farmers agitated by 'political adventurers', and to prove their point, 7 members of the opposition party, Islamic Party (PAS) were arrested under the infamous Internal Security Act a few days after the protest.

Background to the causes of the Protest

In their move to check inflation, the Malaysian government had been controlling and keeping the prices of padi low. The farmers were offered the price of \$26 to \$30 per pikul (60.5 kg) depending on the grade of rice they produced. (The market price for 1 kg of rice is about \$1). With an average of only 4 acres to till, life is indeed hard for the farmers.

Weeks ago, in January 1980, the National Padi Authority increased the farmers income with a subsidy of \$2 in the form of coupon issued in the farmer's name. The coupon however is not cashable and can only be deposited in the government saving institutes. The new subsidy ~~only~~ ~~the~~ ~~stricken~~ farmers, with an annual income of less than \$1000 are now tied down with a forced saving. And with the inflation rate increasing rapidly in the past months, cash was badly needed for the daily necessities, so much so that many farmers were willing to exchange their coupon for \$1 cash offered by agents and millers. Surely the \$2 subsidy has done nothing to relief the farmers' hardship.



Nevertheless, from the official point of view, it saw no reason for such mass protest, unless "politically agitated".

This was because:

Firstly, harvest in Kedah was good compared to the harvest in 1978 when a drought destroyed 1/3 of the crops (but it failed to mention the sky-rocketing of prices of daily necessities due to inflation.)

Secondly, the Kedah area was covered under the Muda scheme which included irrigation projects covering 250,000 acres of padi fields and a sum of \$400 million (financed by World Bank)

The Muda scheme was part of the green revolution to produce high yielding varieties rice (HYV). Some basic prerequisites of the HYV includes high input of pesticides and optimum irrigation otherwise the scheme could sometimes produce less grain than the traditional method.

Thirdly, the subsidy of \$2 had just been implemented. This was accepted by the representatives of the farmers' Association before the implementation. However, this only reflects the limited representation of the farmers and the restrictions in their bargain for better deals.

Conclusion

That 10 000 peasants had gathered to protest was indeed remarkable, considering the arbitrary arrests and the widely propagated New Economic Policy.

The government could conveniently blamed political parties for 'agitation' as the scapegoat, however whether or not there was 'agitation', the roots of the discontent was one of poverty. The controlled press and other mass media may be played up to block the truth, but the incident will remain reflective of the pride of the rural poor - of the people in Malaysia. As long as the authority is not effectively alleviating poverty in the rural community, more of such protests will spark off for better living and conditions in due course.

Rashid -

Story Cont'd from page 15.

The Americans and their running dogs knew that the showdown was at hand. They compressed their lips. Mr. Holt said clearly, "I would not tolerate to be pushed like that but offhand I would say that the policy of the company stands" "Then we will strike!" shouted Gopal.

The American knew that his confusing, delaying and smiling tactics had lost. In his mind, he was thinking of the US\$2 million project which was confirmed. He knew he needed these workers for the time being.

"But under the circumstance," Holt continued, "since it is an unanimous decision of all and I am a democratic person, we will agree with you. Now can we go back to our jobs?"

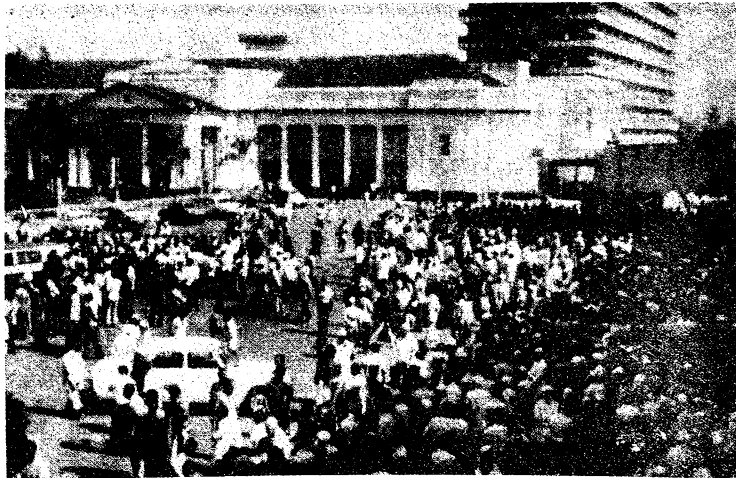
"Before we go," came Abdul's steel voice, "can you write us a memo to testify whatever you have just said, and make it a binding policy subjected to change by the majority of office workers."

Holt knew he was cornered. He cannot dodge anymore. Grudgingly, he wrote down his own words and plan for his next move for another day.

The meeting ended at 5.45 p.m. The office workers were dismissed. Kim Seng came up to Abdul and said, "We have a lot to learn from you."

But Abdul replied, "Don't be so sure now. A few of us will be victimised while others bribed. They will have some more tricks. We must be alert, although we have won the battle today, we may lose the war tomorrow. We must remember that unity is our strength."

The evening sun glowed with redness and the east wind lashed on Kim Seng face, refreshing him as he left his air-con office.



farmers protest outside Govt's Office



In Conclusion.

The recent Olympics events are political events, and through it we can see that the important question is not whether politics should be related to Olympics. The important question is whether the politics influencing the Olympics is good politics or bad politics. It is a question of whether you support racism and aggression.



MEET MISHKA - THE FRIENDLY BEAR



AN ANALYSIS OF THE TRUE STORY OF AH Q.



Many of us know that Lu Hsun is a great man. Some of us know that Lu Hsun is a renown writer, thinker and revolutionary. But why do people consider him great? We know that Lu Hsun supported the Chinese Revolution but many people also did the same — so why is he great? Here, through the analysis of Lu Hsun's greatest and most representative work, THE TRUE STORY OF AH Q, we can have a better understanding of Lu Hsun's thinking and his deep analysis of the mind of the Chinese people. Through understanding 'The true story of Ah Q', we can understand Lu Hsun's subtle style of presentation and its possible effect on Chinese people.

THE ANALYSIS

Historical Background

In the middle of the 19th Century, the various countries in Europe, America (and Japan), having gone through the Industrial Revolution, have developed into strong capitalist countries. China, on the other hand, is still a weak, semifeudal agricultural society.

Since the defeat at the Opium War in 1840, China fell into deep political and economical crisis. At that period, the European capitalist countries and Japan etc. are trying to solve their contradictions, i.e. of a market to absorb their ever increasing production and a source of raw materials for the needs of their industries. Seeing the weakness of China and its richness in raw materials, those capitalist powers mercilessly invaded China. The corrupted Ching government lost war after war and the results are often (1) payment to the conqueror, (2) letting out of towns and ports, (3) slicing land to gain peace, and (4) signing of unequal treaty. China was then even less than a colony. The Chinese people suffered tremendously and are often treated less than dogs or cats. (If you watch 'Fist of Fury' by Bruce Lee, you will understand better).

Many intellectuals, seeing their own country collapsing, began to rise up to find solutions to the Chinese's Dilemma. Some of them are milder in their will, they wanted to preserve the old imperial system; others are more militant, they wanted to overthrow the Ching imperial system through revolution. The latter wanted to set up a Republic and Sun Yat Sen is the most outstanding person belonging to this camp.

Besides the pressure of outright invasion and economic exploitation by the foreign powers, the Ching government also had to face terrible economic crisis and the opposition of the ever growing revolutionary force internally. Externally, it bowed its head before the strong foreign powers and internally, it carried out ruthless suppression of the revolutionary forces. It also increased its cruel exploitation of the lower income people in order to maintain the high military expenses and luxurious living of the noble classes.

Under such situation, the masses of Chinese peasants are on one hand suffering under the heavy taxes imposed by the Ching government and on the other hand squeezed by the landlords. Materially, they are all living in extreme poverty (just like Ah Q who only had a mustn't be-stripped pant); spiritually, they are cut off from civilisation and education by the thousands years old feudal system. Their lives are meaningless and they are living a hopeless life in a hopeless society.

The upper class (ruling class) at that time have no desire nor the ability to change the situation. They are simply too weak and corrupted. The down fall of government was finally brought about by the progressive intellectuals in an uprising in Wu Chang in 1911. This uprising is known as the famous 1911 Revolution or the Sing Hai Revolution.

However, the revolution did not benefit the masses of the heavily exploited class of the society — the peasant. In the later period, the revolutionary camp were even penetrated by landlords, opportunists and other non-revolutionary (in fact oppressive) elements who greedily rob away the interests of the peasants. In the story, Ah Q was sentenced to face the firing squad and the people who passed the sentence were none other than the old provincial candidate and the bailiff (a sort of police head) of the Ching government.

The True Story of Ah Q' depicts the life of a poor peasant, Ah Q, during the 1911 Revolution. Through Ah Q, the writer hopes to reflect the pain and suffering of the Chinese peasants and to criticise the many weakness of the mind of the Chinese Nationalities. (Thanks to Confucius.)

Theme

(A) Exposing the weakness of the thinking of the Chinese people

At that time, Lu Hsun deeply believe that the strongest barrier in the path of China towards richness and power come the Chinese people them-

selves; they have been chained by the corrupted and rotten feudal thinkings of Confucius without even knowing it. In his great work, Lu Hsun expose all these backward thinking by concentrating all of these weakness on his main character, Ah Q. Lu Hsun is just like a doctor using his tool to dig out the root of the sickness of the Chinese people.

(B) Reflecting the exploitation of and oppression of the peasant in the old society.

The life of Chinese peasant in the 19th Century is an extremely miserable one and Ah Q is a representative. Just like the masses of the Chinese peasant he did not have a chance to learn to read and write which consequently deprived him from modern civilisation. He doesn't have a home nor a permanent job and live in extreme poverty. his status in society is right at the bottom. The landlord and bailiff often bullied and cheated him. Ah Q's surname might have been "Chao", but Mr. Chao did not allowed it, so Ah Q had to give up that idea. After having outraged Woo Ma's dignity, Ah Q was forced to give all he had to the landlords and the bureaucrats as a way to "apologise". When Ah Q have something with him, the Chao family pressurised him to sell his goods. Lastly, in order to kill one to warn ahundred, Ah Q was use as the sacrifice. Through the life of Ah Q, Lu Hsun vividly exposeand strongly accuse the cruelty of the feudal force (landlords, bureaucrat) in oppressing the peasants.

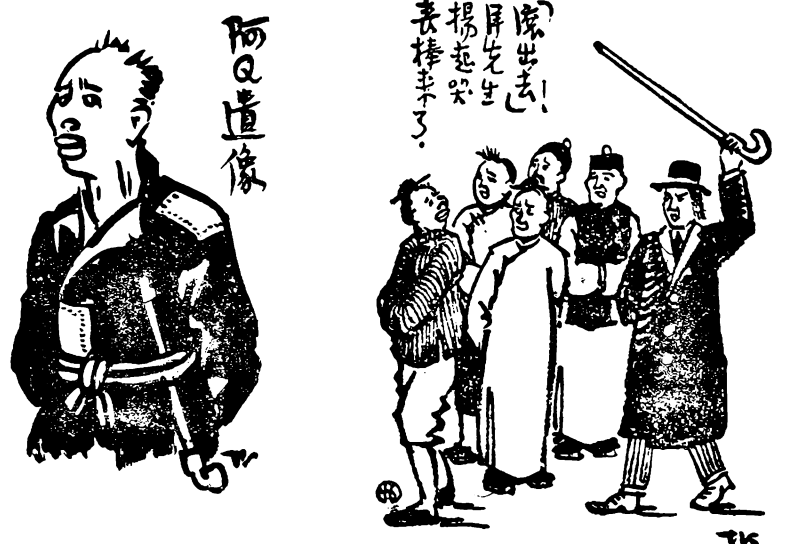
(C) Criticising the weakness of the 1911 Revolution

Most peasants' understanding of the word revolution were very vague and sometimes even superstitious and laughable; they thought the revolutionary army to be "all wearing white helmet and white armour." This reflected that the revolution is not associated with the mass. Of course Ah Q was slightly moved by the revolution as he can see that revolution could do away with the landlords & bureaucrats and establish a new power that is why he should support and take part in the revolution. And when the "revolutionary party" started to gang up with ~~landlords and bureaucrats~~ bureaucrats, they even started selling the badge of the ~~revolutionary party~~ party. Furthermore the provincial candidates and the bureaucrat still remains in power although their names were changed to some other what not which the villager cannot understand. Those opportunists seized the chance and not although their names were changed to some other what not which the villager cannot understand. Those opportunists seized the chance and not only that they didn't allow Ah Q to join the revolution, they executed him.

(D) Satirizing the Chinese people's indifferent attitude towards invasion by foreign powers.

From his many experience of being insulted, Ah Q have devised a method of tackling others: Bullying those weaker than him and if he meet an opponent stronger than him, he would use his "spiritual victory strategy" ----- imaging the opponent to be his son hitting his own cheek to satisfy his frustration. However, due to the fact that most of the villagers in Wu Chung are stronger than him and economically better off than him, he had to cheat himself throughout most his life when others insulted him, he would cheer himself up by saying: "I use to be better off than you" or "my son will be better off than you!". Through this weakness of Ah Q, Lu Hsun tries to describe the miserable state of China which is always bullied, dispersed and insulted by foreign powers. Lu Hsun, in his book "Grave", remarked: "The Chinese people dared not to face the realities, they try to hide away or cheat. They have created many incredible 'solutions' to their problems and thought them to be right path"

The writer hope that the reader can obtain a copy of "The true story of Ah Q" and read it. The writer hopes that the readers would not only understand the true story of Ah Q but also look around in our society to observe the character of people in our society. There might not be any Ah Q but there certainly are a lot of Ah X, Ah Y, Ah A and Ah B etc.....

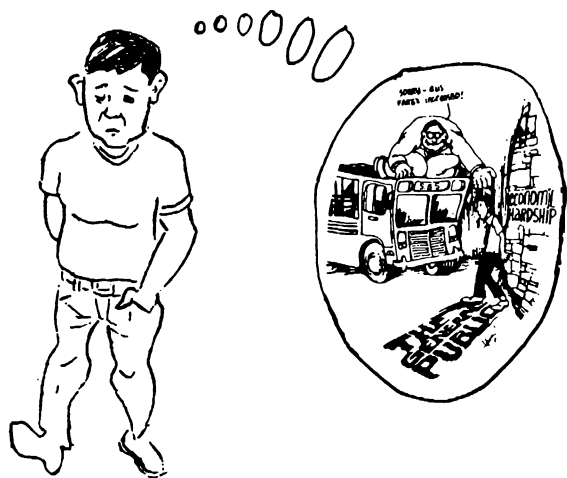


STORY TITLE:

BATTLE IN THE OFFICE

The alarm rang. It was 6.30 a.m. Habitually, Kim Seng woke up to wash his face and prepare for office. He picked up the newspaper and moved to the kitchen for his bread and coffee. The headline flashed, 'Reds in the Army!!' He gave a snort and glanced through without reading. His thoughts slowly began to focus on his own office and what was going to happen. Suddenly his eyes sparkled when he read 'EAC clerks strike'. The column was small and merely mentioned that some clerks in EAC is striking. No reasons were given. Yes, they always do that. They never publish the reasons of the workers so that workers are made to look like irrational people. But who would strike if they are not exploited? Thinking about his own coming battle in the office, His hands turned cold with anxiety and fear.

Today is the battle day between the management and office workers in his company over retrenchment. The office workers wanted the management to pay adequate compensation for those retrenched and also promise that no future retrenchment were to be conducted. The management position of course did not concur with the workers and they knew that they had the authorities' backing especially when they pioneer industries status. Kim Seng recalled Abdul's words during one of the workers' meetings, "True, for these few months the work has slackened but surely the company is obliged to keep us, after all we had made them so much profit that for the past three years they are able to send back few million dollars every year to their home country. These profits ought to be used to keep this company going so that we can retain our jobs and feed our families. There ought to be legislations to control this drain of profits out of our country. But instead we have legislations that actively encourage such profits to go out. Who do these legislators serve? Since these people do not want to help us at all, then we have to help ourselves by organising ourselves or else we will starve. We must fight, in our case, to stop this retrenchment." These logics rang loudly in Kim Seng's ear. He knew that Abdul was right. But to decide to stand up against the bosses was painful for him. For all his working life, he had been the 'Silent Company Man'. He rationalised for the bosses whenever they made the workers work extra hard. Kim Seng had always wanted to show that he was very hard working, hoping that the bosses would earmarked him for promotion. And for Kim Seng, a promotion means more authority, more money which means his family can live a little better. All these while he had been thinking of himself and his family, whatever happen to others had no meaning to him. But now, this retrenchment issue had showed him that not only himself was affected, all his fellow workers were affected. It also forced him to see what he refused to see at first - that a foreign-dominated company, will always pass the economic burden to the employees when they face some difficulties. The bosses and their managers always get off lightly. After much maental debate, Kim Seng knew that if he did not stand by his colleagues in today's battle, then they would be manipulated by the bosses.



WAITING FOR BUSES

He gulped his coffee and went down to the bus stop. Waiting for buses is one of the biggest chore of the working people. The buses were usually crowded and most of them just sped passed partly because they were somewhat filled up and partly because the traffic jam had delayed their schedule. All these could be solved if more buses were on the road. Bus transport is now effectively under one management, Singapore Bus Service (SBS), which had promised to provide efficient bus services. But their promises are slow to materialise. On the other hand, they are quick to use their monopoly over the bus transport business to increase their profits. They had increased the basic fare from 5 cts to 10 cts to 20 cts even before they introduce the not-more-than 100 new buses on the road. This means that these profiteers raise the bus fare, collected the profits and used them to buy new buses. They themselves do not need to pay out a large amount of capital for their business and profits. They were making \$7.5 million in

1974 (the year of the busfare hike) and in 1976 their profits stands at \$2.5 million after buying all the new buses and those already ordered. This means that SBS is actually making more than they claimed. It must be remembered that these buses will be able to pay back their own cost within one or two years and after whatever they earned will be pure profits for SBS. Why would the authorities allow a private company to monopolise an essential service like bus transport especially when that company is all out to increase its profit first and public service second? This is one thing Kim Seng cannot understand. A clear example of disregard to public service was the total rejection of concession to both Poly and Ngee Ann students which Kim Seng read about in yesterday's newspaper. The answer of the Managing director of SBS really infuriated him. He only talked about low profits, about cash flow problems a typical capitalist. At this juncture, Kim Seng thought of Gapal's son, Raja who used to cycle to school mainly because to take bus to and from Dover Road is just too expensive. Raja had \$1.50 cts a day as pocket money. If the bus transport is cheap then he needs not go to school exhausted, does not need to get from his hard pressed father extra pocket money and can settle to concentrate on his academic and student organisation work. Yes, if SBS does not aim for super profits but gears to serve the needs of the people then the working people of our country will not have to suffer so much.

It was queer that mere waiting for bus could provoke such deep thoughts in Kim Seng's lively mind. Yes, he had to sharpen his mind to-day to analyse the tricky management. Bus no. 80 arrived. It was packed. Nevertheless, he squeezed in between a small human opening, hanging on to his dear life as the bus dragged lazily away from the bus-stop.

OFFICE FRIENDS

Being the earliest to arrive, Kim Seng had the pleasure to see his office friends parade themselves whilst coming in. Mohammed was the first to come in. With a smile, he nodded at Kim Seng. He was a squarish person, well built and always boasted about his jogging and other form of physical exercises. However, he was a procrastinator. Whenever an office worker complained of overwork, he would ask the person concerned to go through the proper channel i.e. the management to seek redress. He would chide the office workers for not giving due considerations to the bosses. He maintained that nothing could be changed. His pessimism got so sickening that Kim Seng, the most quiet and dogged worker, once asked him sharply whether he had any mental exercise apart from the physical ones-mental exercise of guts, analytical thinking and the will to live with dignity. Mohammed was stung by the question and began to respect Kim Seng a bit more.

Lai Kum came in next. His Cantonese "Ha! Ha!" is gone today. Instead he looked serious and quietly went to his seat which he had warmed for 3 years. He was another 'bread and Butter' proclaimer. But perhaps his most hateful quality was his opportunism. The only reason, thought Kim Seng, why he had chosen to stand by the office workers was because he was leaving the company soon. He wanted to get the best deal and thus he needed the others' help. The bosses also knew his weakness. While looking at him, Kim Seng wondered if he would be bought by the bosses. Abdul had said that every working person is basically a group but that person must have the strength to exercise his good quality and that those of the same group should help him to be so. Kim Seng trusted Abdul but not Lai Kum.

Abdul came in. He was more cheerful than ever. He greeted everyone warmly and took his seat comfortably. He did not pass his Sec. 1. and had been working in this company for 3 years. He had also worked in many places before - factory, construction shipyard etc. The years of struggle in work had left deep linings on his face. He was the most conscious of them all. He knew the management's tricks easily because he had encountered so many in the various places of work. Abdul was married with three children and his pay was only \$350. With overtime, he could earn up to \$450. Even with this meagre income, Abdul was never selfish, kind to everyone and was liked by all for his uprightness. Whenever he faced the bosses, he never flinched or got scared. He never laughed at their sick jokes and always looked firmly at them when they abused him. In him, one could always see the dignity of an office worker, proud of his work and resolute in his struggle for a better life.

The three bosses, two Americans and a Chinese came in. Holt, Shaw and Khoo were their names. These bloodsuckers always smiled at their workers but made them work 3 times as hard with every passing year. Their relationship with the workers was through what they learned from their university course called "Management Science". In it, they learned that the basic human pathological need (i.e. the stomach) was most important. "Keep the stomach just full and head empty", "Cane and carrot treatment" were their philosophy and "Divide and rule" was their management.

Liza, the secretary was the last to arrive. By virtue of her work, she was treated as the office domestic servant of the bosses. She always put on heavy make-up, 5-inches shoes and flashy clothings. She wanted attention but no one bothered about her. Only Abdul understood her feelings for friendship and frustrations in her job. Although she talked a lot about dresses, shopping, cosmetics and cooking, she nevertheless was a kind but alienated person. The other ten girls in the office were of the same nature but differ in levels of serious thinking and guts to change themselves for the better. But all of them had one thing in common - they needed healthy friendship.

STORY

Story Cont'd from page 14.

By 8.30 a.m. all the office workers had assembled. The office was humming with machines gun rattle of the typewriters and human activities like any other factory.

THE FIRST ATTACK

Everything went on as usual, but everyone's heart was pounding away with anxiety to wait for the bosses' reply to their petition sent in yesterday. What would the bosses do? Surely by then, they must have received the petition regarding their negotiation over retrenchment. Why weren't they responding? If they refused to respond, would a strike be inevitable? Plagued with questions, the office workers did their work in their usual hush-hush.

3.30 p.m. The main office door suddenly swung open. The Trade Union chief, Mr. Phey, came in with 2 bodyguards. He stood there for a while and looked around arrogantly. He walked straight into the Number One's room of Khoo and Associates - Mr. Holt. Lam Swee followed him inside. Kim Seng looked at Abdul and asked, "Why did Lam Swee go in there? He had signed our petition didn't he?"

"No, Seng, Lam Swee is a double headed snake. He is actually employed by the bosses to keep an eye on us and to tell the bosses who is the so-called leader so that the bosses can victimised one of us and then break the group's will and strength to fight on. You will see later on," replied Abdul.

3.45 p.m. The buzzer rang. Liza picked up the intercom, then came over to Lai Kum to tell him to go into Mr. Holt's room. "They were using divide and rule policy and they were attacking the weakest first," thought Kim Seng, when Lai Kum walked passed him.

4.00 p.m. Lai Kum came out, deeply thinking. He looked at the others, smiled and just shook his head. "Well, we repelled the first attack," thought Kim Seng. He went over to Lai Kum and asked,

"What did they say?"

"They wanted to promote me to assistant supervisor with \$50 increase. I won't sell out my friends. Even if I do, what is the use? I have already promised the other side that I am coming," answer Lai Kum. He looked at Kim Seng's unfriendly face and casted his eye down. After a while, Lai Kum came over to Kim Seng and said, "I know, you think that now, I did not fighting for a better deal and I

The rest overheard what he said and many came over to congratulate Lai Kum for his effort.

THE BATTLE

4.15 p.m. The manager's door opened. The Big Three stepped out with their running dogs, Lam Swee and Mr. Phey. Mr. Khoo, called on top of his voice,

"Everybody, go to the conference room, we are going to have a meeting!"

The battle had begun.



In the conference room, the oval table was made of rich teak wood and their chairs were very comfortable. This room was reserved for managers conducting their high level meetings. It was the first time that the workers were permitted to step into this 'sacred place' and a feeling of awe caught their breath. The management sat at the head of the oval table, while the workers took their respective places at the end. There were not enough chairs, so some of them were standing. Mr. Khoo began the meeting.

"Well, I see that you have all signed this petition for reconsideration of retrenchment and retrenchment benefits for those laid off. As you all know, the work in the company had slackened for the past 6 months and we are now making a loss. You all probably had heard of the recession and since ours is a service company, we will be inevitably hit. Therefore in order to keep the company going so that some of you can have jobs, we had decided that certain unproductive people and malingerers should go first.

Also, as for the retrenchment benefits, we had just got the consensus of Mr. Phey here, that all of you should have 2 weeks per year for union members. He had strongly insisted that this benefit be the ceiling as only then can the company use the remaining money to keep the company going. As such, I think that it will be best that we all chip in together to make OUR company as viable as possible. Do you have any questions?" He looked around smilingly and calmly. There was a lull of silence. His arguments seemed so logical, almost impossible to refute.

"Well, if there is no question, we can close this"

Before Mr. Khoo could finish, Kim Seng muttered nervously, "What about those nonunion members? What are they supposed to get?" His questions were met with haughty glaring eyes and smiling faces of the management.

Mr. Phey, spoke for the union, "Naturally, nothing in this world is free. You yourself are a union-member. You had paid your subscription of a certain percentage of your pay. Why, we, of course, fight for you while for those who are not union members, well, we cannot speak for them. One more thing, I think you all are getting a very good deal and that the authorities will not like what you have done, i.e. organising yourselves. You are supposed to be organised under us so that you will not fall prey to some political adventurers." He swept the workers' faces with his eyes. Kim Seng plucked up his courage. He shot another question at Mr. Phey, "In other words, what you are saying is that we should drop everything and follow whatever you say, right?" His voice was more firm. Mr. Phey looked at him, then answered in an arrogant voice, "You know, this management is modern and therefore they don't exploit the workers, They and the authorities always have your interests at heart whenever they decide anything. So whatever is given to you, you can be sure that it is a fair one."

"Yeah, and what do you get to tell all these things to us, 3000 per month, isn't it? What is so fair about the deal you have just said -- 2 weeks per year, huh? This is our barest minimum, we want to negotiate for more for our 3 retrenched friends and asking for the company to channel their past profits into maintaining the company and ensure us of some job security," rattled Gopal. Liza also chipped in, "I have only one thing to say and that is the company is not losing money. It only did not have the projected profit. I myself type the letter you sent to New York on Tuesday." A cough came from Mr. Shaw. He smiled and looked hard at Liza. His eyes told her that for what she had said, she was going to pay for it. But somehow, the office domestic servant returned his stare with firm look. Mr. Shaw then faced the crowd, smiled and said, "I think there is some misunderstanding here and what you are asking for is really confusing. You said you want better retrenchment benefits and then you

Anyway, our company's policy is that for u
a. to get 2 weeks for continous service, one month in lieu of notice, and vacation converted to money and it is also the policy of the company that if we do not have work, for this year, we had to lay off people. Frankly, I do not appreciate you all coming with a petition like this. If any of you want to negotiate anything, you can come up to me or Mr. Holt here and talk it over. You can be sure that we will listen to you and give it due consideration for your benefits." His voice sounded like thunder. A dead silence clouded the room. He was an American and the office workers had accustomed to think that the Americans were always smarter and faster in thinking. They were all afraid to speak up, except one.

Abdul knew that he had to speak to break the American's mental domination over his friends. He had jotted down all the main points. He stood up and his steel voice broke the ice of silence, "Mr. Shaw," a pause followed, "our petition is not confusing for anyone who can understand English. First, for those retrenched, we are asking that the company pay the 3 items you mentioned plus a pro-rata bonus. Secondly, as for those who are to be retrenched, we asked you to reconsider. This is because, as already said by Liza, the company is actually making a net profit over US\$6 million after 3 years of operation here. We think that the company should reinvest this profit into this company, as htat it will firstly ensure that we can retain our jobs and secondly the company can be kept going until economic recovery. Now, coming to the petition, this is a means of obtaining the unanimous opinion of all of us. If, as you suggest, that a few of us go and see you, these few are not representative of the whole office and therefore you can turn them down. Of course, they will be victimised. Furthermore, given the prevailing condition that you are the boss, there is no question of individual dealings for then you will be able to benefit a few but not the majority. I am afraid you have to accept this form of representation in the future."

Mr. Holt, knowing that the workers were undeterred, looked around, then said, "Ok, but we must have time to consider whatever you all said and this petition. Right now, I am interested that all of us go back to work and generate revenue for the company. We have been talking the whole day and at the present moment, we have a US\$300 000 job. So I think, we all go back to our jobs and work while we will think about it. I can assure you that we are always amicable."

Kim Seng retorted, "Pardon me, for my slow thinking. You got to congratulate yourself that you have a cohesive group of people here working for you. And I want to ask before we go back to generate revenue for you bosses, is that, when can we have your decision written on papers and that since the management is already here, you can decide on it now. Furthermore, we would like to tell Mr. Shaw, that as far as the policy of the company goes, it can change according to time and situation. And the policy must be beneficial to us too. Finally, we would like the management to know that we look forward to cooperate with you if you can cooperate with us."

POEM

Apolitical Intellectuals

By Otto Rene Castillo *

I

One day
the apolitical
intellectuals
of my country
will be interrogated
by the simplest
of our people.

They will be asked
what they did
when their nation died out
slowly,
like a sweet fire,
small and alone.

No one will ask them
about their dress,
their long siestas
after lunch,
no one will want to know
about their sterile struggles
with "the idea
of the void"
no one will care about the way
they ontologically acquired their funds.

They won't be questioned
on Greek mythology,
or about the self disgust they felt
when someone within them
began to die
the coward's death.
they'll be asked nothing
about their absurd
justifications
born in the shadow
of the total lie.

*OTTO RENE CASTILLO (1936-1967) was born in Quezaltenango, Guatemala. A student activist and organiser since high school days, he was exiled at the age of seventeen, shortly after the C.I.A.-engineered coup that deposed Jacobo Arbenz.

II

On that day
the simple men will come,
those who had no place
in the books and poems
of the apolitical intellectuals
but daily delivered
their bread and milk,
their tortillas and eggs,
those who mended their clothes,
those who drove their cars,
who cared for their dogs and gardens,
and worked for them,
and they'll ask:
"What did you do when the poor
suffered, when tenderness
and life
burned out in them?"

III

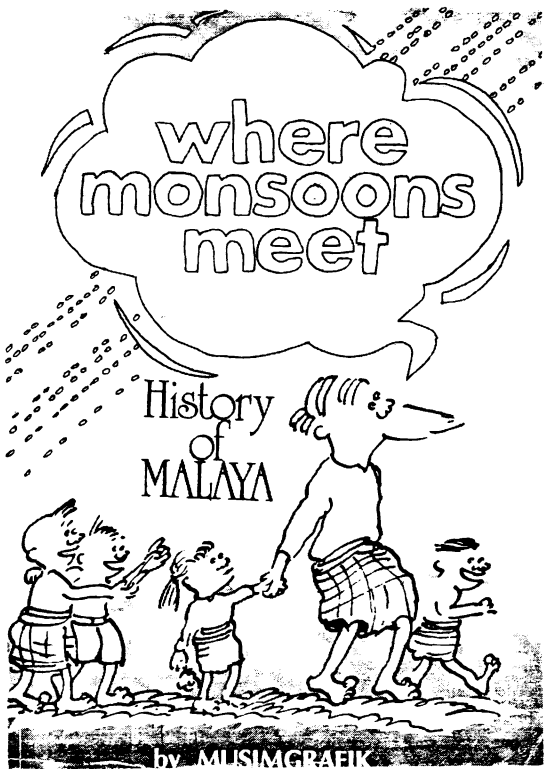
Apolitical intellectuals
of my sweet country,
you will not be able to answer.

A vulture of silence
will eat your guts.
Your own misery
will gnaw at your souls.
And you will be mute
in your own shame.



He was imprisoned and exiled several times during the next decade but managed to continue his studies to found an experimental theatre group, to organise and edit radical student newspapers, and to become one of his country's - and Latin America's - most important younger poets. In March 1967, Castillo and one of his comrades in the national liberation movement were captured, brutally tortured for four days and finally burned alive. As a poet, he is remembered for his humanitarian passion and burning desire for freedom.

BOOK INTRODUCTION



Are you easily put off by historical dates and treaties of wars and conquests? After going through years of history in school, it is not surprising that many of us simply do not bother to know history anymore. The books that we have in school usually are painted with boring and subjective accounts. Most of us are forced to memorise them for the sake of passing the examinations.

"WHERE MONSOONS MEET" is a very refreshing and enlivening history book. Do not be put off by the word 'history' for this book presents history in well illustrated cartoons with added touch of humour. The author through painstaking research, not only tells you the facts with dates but also reflected on the people's livelihood, the way of life and thinking at that time.

This book relates history from the times when Malaya peninsula was under the rule of sultans; how and why the Europeans (Orang puteh) came; the struggle of the local people to stay independent from the Europeans and later from the Japanese; and also illustrates how and why power was transferred to the local administrators.

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