

FILM

Kolkata Film Festival
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IN SPITE OF THE VOILENT times and political demonstrations before the festival cinema halls, the 13th Kolkdata Film Festival celebrated the manner in which film art repays life. Important recent world cinema was fortified with tributes to Sir Laurence Olivier (UK), Glauber Rocha (Brazil), Jean-Luc Godard (France), Abbas Kiarostami (Iran), Fernando Solanas (Argentine), Karel Kachyna (Czechoslovakia), Ken Loach (UK), Amos Gitai (Israel), Nuri Bilge Ceylan (Turkey), Marion Hansel (Belgium), Yogos Tsemberopoulos (Greece). There were also films on the novels of Fyodor Dostoyevsky.

Francisco Vargas Quevedo's "The Violin" (Maxico, 2006, b/w, 99 mins) presents as approach, a soldier bruatally raping a girl. Villagers in the hut are tied to the ground. Other soldiers keep guard over the torture and violence. Fire and smoke emerge from the village. An old man, with his right hand missing, boards a truck, carrying his violin on a sling. There are other musicians, and the truck meanders through mountain roads. The violinist, Don Plutarco (Don Angel Tavira) and his guitarist son, Genaro (Gerardo Taracena) play before a restaurant, while Genaro's son collects donations from passersby. Genaro buys bread and cheese from a roadside woman vendor, with a few coins and drugs. Music and dances liven up an ill lit bar. A man slips a gun to a boy, who carries it out in a packing case. The bar owner provides guns to Genaro and others. Police arrive and there is an alert to stay inside. Plutarco, Genaro and his son, again set off in a crowded truck. Genaro sells drugs to a girl travelling on the truck. Plutarco, his son and grandson get off on a highway in the middle of the mountains.

A fleet of women and children run along the hill tracks, as soldiers have attacked the village. Amid gunshots and hovering helicopters, Genaro runs in search of his wife. In the village, two men are being tortured. A woman is kicked and driven out of her home. Houses are set on fire. Soldiers torture insisently, to find out whereabouts of the village leader. Genaro runs in fear, as soldiers chase with gunfire. Young men in the village are shot. At night besides twig fires, the violinist plays to women and children in the forest. The grandson enquires about his mother, from his grandfather. His mother was with uncle Rafeal in the village. Close ups of faces shine through the burning embers of the bushes. Destiny was to fight. Hand held pans document the anxious faces. Next morning Genaro enters a guerilla training camp, where armed guerillas conduct military drill. Genaro explains to the guerilla commander the situation in the village. His wife Lupe and daughter have been taken away. The violinist, Plutarco and his grandson carry tree branches for firewood in Salina camp. They reach a closed estate, and enquire of his dauther-in-law, from the landlord. Plutarco requests for a mule, and promises to give harvest. The landlord obtains Plutarco's signature on a blank paper.

Plutarco rides along with the mule. He is made to get off the mule by soldiers, who search the violin and the violin case. Under orders, Plutarco plays before the military sector commander, with his right hand covered fist tied to the violin bow. The army captain (Dagoberto Gama) releases Plutarco, but keeps the violin. The captain plays discor-dant notes. Plutarco explains that he has come to harvest corn. Returning to the guerilla camp, Plutarco tells his son

that he has lost his violin. Next day Plutarco again plays the violin before the army captain. The captain gives food to Plutarco, and asks information on the rebel. Plutarco does not divulge, and claims he is a poor musician. Diverting to the corn fields, Plutarco visits his hut in ruins. He digs the ground with a cutter, and pulls out bullets for his son. Again Plutarco plays the violin, before the captain, and offers to teach music to the captain. He states that his hand was blown up in the surrounding violence. The captain returns the violin, on condition that Plutarco would come every day.

Plutarco overhears that the soldiers are shortly moving to Tres Cruces. He goes to the fields, and digs out a concealed box. The violin is placed inside the underground box, and Plutarco fills up the violin case with bullets. Sentries at the gate offer a revolver to Plutarco for safe journey. Plutarco passes information that soldiers are moving to Tres Cruces. But next day, Plutarco finds the violin missing from the concealed box. The army captain seizes Plutarco, and drives him in a jeep. The captain pulls a pistol, as Plutarco opens the violin case. The violin and the bow string are handed to Plutarco by the captain. Soldiers bring in the other arrested guerillas, including Genaro. The captain orders Plutarco to play, but he declines, and puts the violin back in its case. There is rapid gunfire, the guerillas in custody are killed and the music is over. Sometime later a little girl begs for alms in a cafe, while another boy sings of the noble Hidalgos.

Through stark black and white photography, "The Violin" captures the brutal conflict between the insurgent villagers and the security forces. Conforming to actuality and Mexican civil war references "The Violin" is violent and full of atrocities. Francisco Vargas Que vedo avoids any ultra dramatization. The attention is fixed to the fears and the poverty, and less on the brutalities. The music and the violinist carry sad memories of a people. Don Angel Tavira gives a moving performance. The violence is never served to create an effect. The scenes always relate to the events. The violin case full of bullets, carried by the violinist father for his son, on a mule, is never spectacular. □□□