

The Caiman

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Nanni Moretti's "The Caiman" (Italy, colour, 112 mins) has numerous film narratives within the principal, grand plan film. The debut is a quotation from Mao ze Dong : "The world is yours, as well as ours." The police arrive at a communist party organization meeting, and Aida Kitt (Margherita Buy) tears up a photo of Stalin.

Film "Catacrat" of the early 1970s concludes. Bruno Bonomo (Silvio Orlando), the producer who revived genre film in Italy, relating to assassination films, has not produced any important film since then. Some of his films were a disaster, and he was preparing for exile. His next film would be a costume drame, "Return of Christopher Columbus from America." The bustle of assistants, sets, costumes, and the 90th birth day of film maker, Dino Rogi, comes alive. Teenaged son, Robeto, prepares a spaceship from parts. Bruno sends his children-two boys and a girl to sleep with stories from his films and scripts.

In another interior film, Aida confronts a critical food critic, who has denounced a restaurant. While recipes are checked in the kitchen, live lobsters and boiling water are thrown at the critic. The food critic gets bitten up by lobsters, and confesses having lost all sense of taste, after sinusitis. Aida spears him in the stomach. Such films were considered as fighting for dictatorship of auteur cinema. There are conversation references to movies, studios and the cinema history of producer Dino de Laurentis. A producer, walks away with a box of scripts. Bruno watches Roberto playing football, but he is put on the sidelines by the coach. The interior films bring in a dream, where a ceiling in an office crashes with suitcase full of cash. Bruno sleeps amongst reels. Plagued by overdrawl from banks and payment to creditors, Bruno has a meeting with producers RAI. He is interested in filming "The Caiman", scripted by young Teresa (Jasmine Trinca), concerning irregular owner-ships and shares. The collaborators do not telephone. The conclusion of the new TV film, would be on animation. Wife, Marisa (Margherita Buy) sings at classical concerts of Mojart and Handel. Teresa's script on Caiman's slush funds would be an ambitious, solid film. Cash is stuffed in suit cases, and money is sent across frontiers to Swiss bank accounts. "Caiman" is based on Italy's prime minister and media tycoon, Silvio Berlusconi. Producer worries in the swimming pool too.

For thirty years, Bruno has been making anti-leftist films. Now he was venturing into a leftist film on Berlusconi. "Caiman" is about power and Italy. Bruno has meetings with financiers, on his ideological film. In Italy, nobody has made a film on Berlusconi. He has an icecream with his son, Giacomo. A liberal publisher, Marisa, is introduced by a journalist. There are discussions on general elections, Italy overall, political power and new political forces. TV interviews of political leaders sparkle debate, and meetings denounce the illiberal country, run by illiberal forces. Bruno's marriage with Paula is breaking up. They decide that the children were to be given impression that they love each other. Bruno walks

alone in a crowded shopping area. Preparation of budget schedules keeps Bruno busy, and he sleeps in the office. The actor (Nanni Moretti) for the Berlusconi film is selected. Shooting begins with film Berlusconi travelling in a car. The left-wing audience would love to hear about Berlusconi. It would be in the nature of a European film, portraying the rise of fascist forces, along with Berlusconi's personal dimension, of ascendancy from Milan to Prime Minister. Paula, the free and bold wife of Bruno, returns to her first love music, and sings in a choir. Bruno picks up the children from school. Paula wants to buy her share of the apartment. Bruno sleeps with his children.

The working relationship between Bruno and the script writer, Teresa continues. Teresa directs the early shots. The script delves into Polish financiers and offshore accounts held by Italians. Berlusconi is portrayed as more private, less as head of state. On a Sunday, there is a lunch at Teresa's country house. Bruno is in a car with friends, Teresa and a baby. Sets are being built and painted. Children dance on the sets. The selected actor does not want to play the role of Berlusconi. Bruno notices his wife in a restaurant with another man. Returning home Bruno tears up clothes, and a sweater gifted by his wife.

Thoughts are provoked for a film on "Cinema and psychoanalysis". When Paula is performing with orchestra and choir, Bruno walks on stage with the query : "What do I do?" Sets of ships are being pulled on wheels and trailers, for the Columbus film. While Bruno is asleep, the house is being destroyed by cranes. Before a notary, Bruno transfers the rights of his apartment, to wife Paula. He plays with his children. Sets and theatrical equipments are assembled for shooting. The film 'Berlusconi' speaks not just as an accused, but as leader of a country in court. Arguments on waste of public funds, evidence of lies, and existence of slush funds continue. 'Berlusconi' is sentenced to seven years in prison. There is a fire bomb at a post office building.

In "The Caiman" extracts of "films within a film" are in abundance. But the financial and domestic downslide of producer Bruno is never lost. Moretti recalls the Berlusconi years, and the passion for cinema. Berlusconi is painted with parody and folklore. Violence in discussions and on the road is never excluded. Arnaldo Catinari's mobile camera portrays a certain reality for the spectator to see, and not just influence elections. The film was screened at the 37th IFFI in Goa. □