



This film is one of the seminal works of cinema in developing countries. Solanas' three-part epic on the popular struggle of Argentina deals with liberation and the national question, throwing light on the politics of many other Latin American countries. The first part, Neocolonialism and Violence, deals with the history of Argentina, the ravages that have been foisted with the most abject brutality on what could be one of the most important countries in Latin America. Part Two, Act of Liberation, is a series of notes, testimonies and debates on the liberation struggle and the Argentinian people. The third part, Violence and

made this chilling observation: 'Latin America's veins are forever opened for sucking and economic draining by colonialists, and big business corporations in Washington and London, aided by the local oligarchy'. A 'Vietnamised' situation of a unique type existed and is still existing in certain countries of Central and South America. These poor countries, underdeveloped by a long succession of USA administrations up to the present one of Reagan's, are still flailing with political machetes at the USA's octopus tentacles. A passage from Galeano's Days and Nights of Love and War informs us that 'the Latin American societies are today

intelligentsia.

The film underscores the fact that cultural workers — be they film-makers, sculptors, novelists, painters, musicians, etc — cannot and should not sit idly on the sidelines and not participate in the liberatory actions that bring about meaningful freedom, peace and independence. The fact that there is now in the repository of mankind a film of the calibre of *The Hour of the Furnaces* means that mankind in the maw of oppression are aware of the connection of culture and liberation.

The film is skillfully compartmentalised so that a particular episode dealing with a particular aspect of struggle could be separated from the main reel and shown elsewhere. The political organisers in Latin America used the peculiar nature of the film's construction to exhibit it clandestinely to large groups of people in a major drive of political mobilisation. This was to raise the political consciousness of the people and to engage them in a people's uprising. This goal — as we hear about the generals who are now paying for murders and atrocities against people — has been achieved.

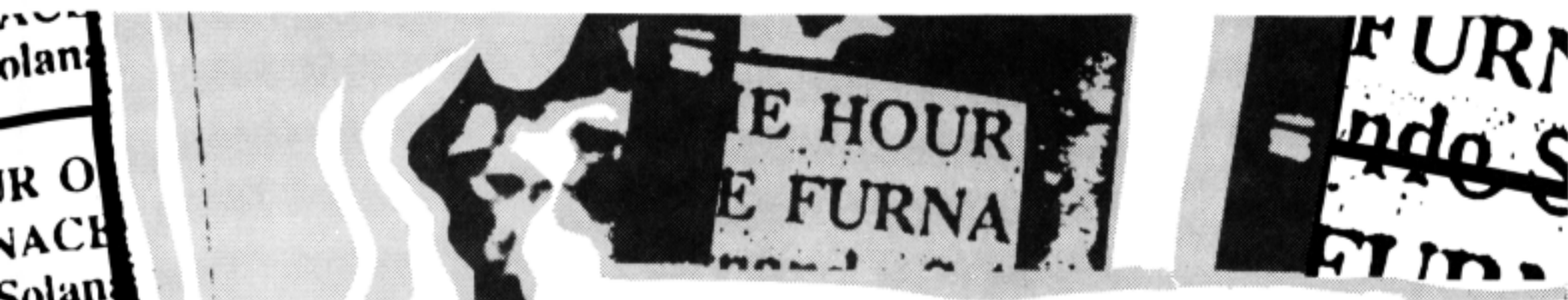
*Hour of the Furnaces* brings to our most immediate present the unbelievable horror of super-exploitation and massacre of innocents who resisted the Argentinian oligarchy which had all the protection of the junta. It shows, in chilling detail, how this systematic orchestration of op-

Liberation, deals with the meaning of violence in the process of liberation. Distributed in video by The Other Cinema, we are told the last section 'is open and invites new testimonies of combatants'.

The Pentagon hawks, manipulated by monopoly swindlers, invaded Vietnam and an international outcry against this aggression, unparalleled in history, reverberated throughout the world. It could be said that this shameful exercise in Southeast Asia detracted attention from what the USA was doing in 'its own back yard' — Latin America.

Uruguayan writer, Eduardo Galeano, divided into several categories: the living, the dead, the dying, the missing, the surviving and the fighting. To be alive is a victory'.

The film under review is about Latin America, focussing mainly on Argentina under the jackboot of military juntas in the period of 1966 to 1967; this, it must be remembered, was the same period of the aggression against the people of Vietnam. It was evolved by film-makers who worked in consultation and dynamic contact with the underground cadres of the progressive movement in Argentina. These included the workers, peasants and revolutionary



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the higher classes. 50 families own 10-million acres of land. Of the million farm workers, 75% cannot satisfy their daily needs. Out of 20 successive governments, 17 of them came to power either through rigged elections or coups. This is the shameful record of Argentina.

The city of Buenos Aires, the capital, is a centre of economic activity, corruption, Mafia-styled commercial undertakings, etc. In a word, it is a cradle of the agrarian oligarchy and the industrial bourgeoisie. Of the seven million city population, one million are foreigners who came in to do business of whatever type. Some of them are

masters: USA, Spain and Britain. This cultural and ideological penetration was used to annihilate the idea of being a nation worthy of charting its own destiny. The narrator sums it up succinctly: 'Buenos Aires is a city with its back to the nation'.

For someone who is familiar with the apartheid-fascism of South Africa, *Hour of the Furnaces* can be a chilling reminder of the horrors that still obtain in the so-called civilised 20th Century. The 'torture stadiums' such as Siza Dukashe in the Ciskei bantustan, the daily massacres and disappearance of people, detention of thousands of children under the age of thirteen, the

pressive rule is unscrupulously engineered by Washington and carried out by the Argentinian ruling classes. In some countries the armed forces are used to police the interests of the oligarchy or the rich classes. The army, in most instances, belongs to a lower class cleverly brainwashed to believe in what is called 'carrying out civil duties to defend the Constitution'. But in Latin America, the junta and the oligarchy are inseparable — they are the head and limbs of the same body. The narrator of the film puts the matter clearly: 'In Vietnam the people had only to look in the sky to see the enemy. But in Argentina, it is difficult to identify the enemy. It is the same national, of the same blood, who facilitates US exploitation of the masses.' Thus the whole of Argentina was turned into a landscape of hunger and violence.

*Hour of the Furnaces* exposes these daily statistics of violence. For instance, we learn that 43% of the rural population die every year, which is larger by far than the population that perished at Hiroshima/Nagasaki. We learn that there are a million cases of syphilis brought about by sub-human living conditions, frustration, poverty and prostitution. Four out of ten children die at birth, and there are 900 000 abandoned children. Factories are daily surrounded by the police and the fascist army. 2% of the cattlemen own 40% of the livestock and the lower classes earn 20 times less than



Gestapo criminals wanted by various organisations for their crimes in Nazi Germany. They were in Buenos Aires to 'advise' the Statutory Councils on principles of 'law and order'.

Buenos Aires was created to become an engine — a nerve centre — to run and dictate the socio-political, economic and cultural life of the entire Argentinian society. Through universities, the so-called islands of democracy within the oppressed, the system succeeded to corrupt the national consciousness among the intelligentsia so that the latter should marvel at anything not Argentinian, to glorify the foreign

dumping of millions of people in arid and unproductive bantustans, and countless other atrocities are, for us, the long hour of the furnace. But the fact that our people are fighting back with everything in their power, the blazing streets of our time, means that we are also giving the enemy the taste of fire.

*Hour of the Furnaces* is dedicated to Ernesto 'Che' Guevara and other Latin American revolutionaries who sacrificed their lives to the total liberation of America.

by Bachana Mokwena

