FOR SOME of my generation the last few weeks will be remembered as a time when we watched with astonishment and horror the unexpected final act of a superb drama, Shakespeare, Marlow, that time when spectators were put in the place of the players, and were not permitted to silence as genius created its ending.

Janet Jagan who for decades we had known as the paragon of the peace and tranquillity of this province, was overthrown by a bitter new woman, assassinated by Cheddi with sugar, rice, bauxite, workers and their strikes, like Cheddi part of Guyana's tragic battle first against the sugar interests of Bohorong and then the paranoid fear of a declining British colonialism, the conflicts of the Cold War, the bitterness of the Burnham split, the sheer loneliness of an engineered defeat, this Janet Jagan a Caribbean legend we thought, was now not Guinean. She, who had refused to be a White American, was now a White Lady. In that word she was stripped of past or of history, robbed even of a nationality, she was flung into the nameless position of a race and of a sex. She was a White Lady.

As a race and as a gender she could not be citizen but was a logic which, of my generation, knew well. We had fought this. Those, ten, fifteen years older than we, were had fought, it on the battlefields of Europe as citizens became Jews or Gypsies. We had seen it fought out in Algeria as the demand to be citizens and not Muslims wrote the first chapter of civil war, at another level we had fought it in the long protracted battle to be not subjects but citizens. We had joined the Civil Rights struggle to be not a race but citizens with full rights. We had losses at the victory over what we hoped was the last bastion of non-citizenship, apartheid South Africa. As immigrants into this country we claimed the privacy of citizenship above all race. There, in Britain, we fought for the right of black people — Asians they were called, Africans, our own Caribbean to be fully part of the British political and economic life. To be not races, but citizens.

We were still fighting throughout what was becoming "fortress Europe" for the rights for any definition of a citizen which implied race.

Here, in our own backyard, race threatened to dominate. At the level of some former colonial oppressor, some arrogant expatriate manager knocking back whisky on a tropical verandah, but Janet Jagan.

Passed the news to Le Peace France. Pass the news to the crazy Irish woman boozed in Cork or in Clare, pass the news to the neo-fascists in Germany, Britain, Switzerland or Belgium. Disenfranchise your black men and your white women, send them back rightless.

Guyana — a certain Guyana — has shown you the lead. They want no white women.

The act didn't finish, not quite. Tragedy turns into comic opera. Those who for years had refused to fight, permitted the House of an Israeli undisputed, were. They were we to explain Walter Rodney's murder or indeed the assassination of Farther Dark the Jewish journalist, who had pursued Father Morrison, Editor of the Catholic Chronicle, were not affronted by some supposed "tragic" of events.

Some of us thought that the nature of this curious ideological specimen of a "co-operative" republic justified accroition. Now I am not totally damning Burnham. He had a good anti-colonial track record. Southern Africa is grateful to him for support when there were little. I remember I read that history will prove him heads higher than either Hoyte or Hamilton Greene. But, come of it, not free and fair elections. I hear their叫做 call a cat a cat, to keep Cheddi in particular and Indians in general (some exceptions) out of Burnham's power. It was the fear of Indians, carefully cultivated by interests outside of the Caribbean, and well watered by ambitions within the country — this last fully multi-racial — which kept Guyana divided, Burnham in power and skew the peaceful for idealistic Cheddi and Janet when they did win free and fair elections.

Now we have knowledge of the Guyanese scene and a cursory look at the demographic statistics and it took neither prophet, puntit or a Yeesna to foretell the results of Guyana's recent elections. Janet would win. Janet won.

She needed no rigging to win. There may well have been some irregularities but nothing which could upset the final result. Those who were interested, the observers were satisfied. Why then this hue and cry? What could Hoyte hope for?

Tougher Than Cheddi

Did Janet Jagan decide on a private near-secret swearing in because she feared that a political vacuum would tempt a coup-d'état? Janet Jagan was after all no lady, white or black. She had to be tough to be Cheddi Jagan's wife. Tougher than Cheddi.

She was not vulnerable through the electoral ballot. She was vulnerable through Guyana's army and police. They were principally of African origin. They were Guyanese. She was a White Lady. They remained loyal and gave us all back a shred of respectability.

West Indians boys are marchin' Some are black Some are white Some are brown Others light....

Sing it, sing it, in praise of Guyana's army and police. Tell it, tell us, we do not dare forget it. The comic opera changes again. Now there is the real threat of a Bosnian, a Rwanda, a Lebanon, a White Woman, Indian man or woman — wait for the time. Our generation, and I hope that one must know that too.

There is nothing more vicious than a race for itself. In a race war mercy disappears, civilisation is dynamised, humanity is the real holocaust, sent to a God of race. We skirted near to that in Guyana. Very near it.

We escaped — far, yes. We, in increasing numbers of whispers and sometimes recently in coveting, I have heard and seen some Indians compare their condition in Trinidad to Tobago under the PNM to their condition under the Burnham regime. Under both they were oppressed and more ferociously so than were the British brought them over as indentured labour.

I gave up arguing. This, a myth if there ever was one, had become part of the arsenal of our own political comic opera. The one virtue of Manning's statement — of which wild is the main charitable word — was that it shocked some of us back to reality. Trinidad and Tobago has never been and never will be the option to make it one. There are some Guyaneseque strains at work. There is a helluva lot of Guyaneseque talk in Guyana. There are some Janets among us who too have been robbed of past and history because they refused to be the powerful expatriats we preferred white people to. I don't think they would however advocate racism we keep for those who, having shared our struggle, are vulnerable. But this is a far cry from Trinidad and Tobago being Guiana — yet.

There is another option. With our neighbour's house threatens with fire we can begin seriously to wet our own roof. Farce can become tragedy. Gods in our own race image always demand sacrifices of gold first, blood later. That blood will also be our own.

The drama continues. The ski-ing youthful Poniff of very recent memory is a faltering shuffled, footstep bent old man. The gaze has settled into a penetrating sadness where hope is already eternity. He has learned much, this Pope, Polish nationalist, Slav, European, anti-communist. He was once much, this Pope, and learned that there was losing in the winning. The triumphant Church of nostalgia for the Middle Ages was a Polish mirage. It was not true. It was not true. There was a resurrected Phoenix like from the ashes of communism. It was drug gangs, beggars on the street before war defeated the great foe, the apparent defeat of Croat and Serb, Christian and Muslim, a democracy recently gained and already threatened. Yes, a certain freedom had been won. All that was excepted and to the extent of the rottenness. We have hardly here in Trinidad and Tobago noted the change in Vatican politics. We are still arguing with Father Ryan persuading ourselves that the morality of the Church is about those clerical sexual misdemeanours which titillate us. Nothing of the sort. Under our eyes a new morality is being forged not out of ashes, but out of the blood of the martyrs for justice we, in our generation, have known, or perhaps out of our dreams — those of any other generation.

It is this Pope who has finally taken the Catholic ship away from the portals of Constitutional States. It is the Vatican who is now the real champion of the secular state. This too was part of the Catholic-Jewish encounter: the freedom for Israel, Catholics to be separated from other citizens. It is this the Vatican's prudence in Iraq.

Christians there are still citizens. It is this the massive assistance of Irish Catholics to Muslims threatened in Bosnia and if this the permission to open a mosque in Rome or the continuing co-operation not only in Catholic Goa or Kerala but throughout India, or the recent overturns to the Patriotic Church in China. Champion of Human Rights — yes, but Papa meant it.

Not as the easy fashioned level many of us wished. Not even in any perfection. Papa is not perfect and he is full of blind spots. But at another level — that of the monastic promises of peace and of good news to the poor.

Who of our generation thought we would see this Pope in Fidel's Cuba? I laughed with the naughtiness of my age as Fidel, so caught out in his perennial guerrilla fatigues, dressed for church, became the erring son of Papa, scolded, capped on the knuckles, hugged, defended, loved.

The Polish nationalist had disappeared as black Cubans soldiers under a burning tropical sky off fer their salute that Cuba's right wing Vivas ran to Caribbean swaying waists.

The rain had fallen, the Pope said.

The Heavens opened, the Prophets would say. For perhaps our suffering was not the idea that had not all been in vain. Guyana was a small episode, a skirmish, in a battle already won. Humanity had won it, some would say. Put that way.

What was said about words into ploughshares, neither Jew nor Gentile, peace and justice embracing? The curtain falls. Vivaldi. Fierro.