

## CHOU EN-LAI

Few men have dominated the world scene for over half a century as the Chinese Premier, Mr Chou En-lai, whose demise at the age of 71 occurred recently. Though hailing from an ancient mandarin family, Chou "declassified" himself and became an accredited leader of the proletarian revolution and worked ceaselessly for the establishment of the communist regime in China. As Premier and Number Two in Chinese hierarchy, Chou occupied a unique position which was never assailed at any time. Known to the world as a pragmatist, Chou largely shaped the Chinese policies within the framework of the principles laid down by Mao Tse-tung who was and still continues to be the fountain-head and source of Chinese policy. China earned respect and attention when she thwarted the U.N. forces in Korea and achieved a stalemate in that region. Chinese military strength as a factor in Asia came to be recognized and her cooperation became vital for the Indo-China settlement. Chou En-lai's participation in the Geneva Conference on Indo-China in 1954, enhanced his as well as China's status further. The Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian countries in 1955 improved Chou En-lai's image, prestige and

## On Men & Matters

—R. V.

standing in the world. Along with Pandit Nehru, Chou endorsed the five principles of international relations known as *Panch-sheel* which is now accepted as the basic code of inter-governmental conduct. During all this time, China was an ally of the Soviet Union and a friend of India and an inveterate enemy of the Western world headed by the United States. But events took a different turn very soon. The unshakeable alliance cast in unbreakable metal between the Soviet Union and China snapped and the ideological differences degenerated into an uneasy peace at the borders. India-China brotherhood evaporated, followed by a physical assault over a dispute relating to No-man's land, embittering the feelings between the two countries. China became an ally and a friend of a member of SEATO, an organization against

which the non-aligned countries ranged themselves with ideological fanaticism. Finally, the age-old hostility of China to the United States was dissolved in a ping-pong diplomacy and a political *tete-a-tete*. Whether the Chinese honeymoon with the United States is transient or permanent, one cannot predict with any degree of certainty but so long as it lasts and so long as the Big Powers talk to each other instead of talking at each other, there is hope for peaceful settlement of world issues.

On the home-front, the Chinese Administration has emerged as a nation self-sufficient in food and self-reliant in industrial production and technology. The country's emergence as a nuclear Power has added a new dimension to the balance of power in the world. These are some of Chou's contributions to the world events of the last quarter of a century. It will be too much to expect that the replacement of Chou from the scene will have a serious impact on Chinese policies. On the other hand, the party machine will pick up one who will fit into the position and carry out its behests. Unless there is a change in the Chinese attitude towards India, a mere change of personnel gives little hope of restoration of normalcy between the two countries.

(Continued from previous page)

state here the present views. The oldest of the four is the western. Work on it was started by Vikrama Chola and completed by Kulothunga II. Credit for the north should also be divided between the two monarchs, Kulothunga II and Krishnadevaraya. It is believed that the former also erected the base of the eastern tower. Kopperunjinga added the superstructure, which was renovated late in the eighteenth century by Pachaiyappa Mudaliar's mother-in-law. The southern *gopura* was erected by Kopperunjinga.

The towers are works of art. They scintillate with Middle Chola brilliance in sculpture. The images in the niches are bold and striking, breathing the certitude and prosperity of the times. Their iconography is of surpassing interest, particularly the dance *karanas*. These illustrate the fact that the Tamil artist of the past often went to his scriptures for subjects. The makers of Mahabalipuram illustrated episodes from Bharavi's *Kiratarjuniyam* and from the *Devi Mahatmyam*. The Chola twelfth century was exceptionally rich in literature. Tribhu-

vanam illustrates *Kambar*, and Chidambaram *Bharatha*.

The shrine of the Goddess is big enough to be considered a temple. Probably begun by Naralokavira, it was completed in the next century under Kulothunga III. It has, or had, some old paintings on the ceiling of the *mantapa*. The Pandya Nayakam shrine, dedicated to Lord Sbramanya, is lovely art. It has the simulation of a chariot. It is a compact and well proportioned structure. It is a Pandya contribution.

A historic hall is the hundred-pillared *mandapa*, built by Naralokavira. It was here that a Pandya, probably Jatavarman Vira Pandya I, celebrated the "anointment of hero and victor". It again came into prominence in Vijayanagar times. Today it is in a neglected state.

But the final word here on the Chidambaram temple must not be the story of the historian, but that of the devotee. When we remember this temple, we remember the saints and sages of old who sang of the Lord of the Dance.