

Young South African Germany

"To experience any form of migration is to get a lesson in the importance of tolerating others' points of view. One might almost say that migration ought to be essential training for all would-be democrats."

— Salman Rushdie

FROM 14 to 28 November 1988, fourteen young South Africans went on a tour of the Federal Republic of Germany (including a brief visit to East-Berlin) hosted by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) and co-ordinated by IDASA in South Africa.

The tour group consisted of André Zaaiman, Nic Borain and Pro Jack from IDASA, township activists, young professionals, as well as academics and student leaders from five Afrikaans universities. Political loyalties ranged from pro-partition to pro-nonracial democracy, which led to interesting and, at times, heated debates within the group on issues such as sanctions, violence and the future economic/political system of South Africa.

The tour was well organised and although the programme had an in-built liberal bias, ample room was left for changes on request; it also provided for a good balance between formal meetings and time for relaxation. Our hosts generously provided tour guides to look after our every need.

We started off in Stuttgart with a visit to the State Parliament and a

visit to the Berlin Wall; a visit, in heavy snow, to the War Memorial for 20 million Russians who gave their lives in the fight against Hitler's tyranny; and a stopover at the Plötzensee Memorial which is dedicated to the Resistance Movement and where a scroll buried beneath the foundation stone, bears these words:

"During the years of the Hitler dictatorship, from 1933 to 1945, hundreds of human beings were put to death by judicial murder on this spot. They died because they chose to fight against the dictatorship for human rights and political freedom . . . Through this Memorial, Berlin honours these millions of victims of the Third Reich who, because of their political convictions, their religious beliefs or racial origins; were vilified, abused, deprived of their freedom or murdered."

Moving to Bonn, we were given, among other things, the opportunity to learn more about the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) and its history. This foundation, founded in 1958 by the then President of the German Republic, Theodor Heuss, is named after the German writer-politician Friedrich Naumann (1860-1919), of whom Ralp Dahrendorf (chairman of the FNF board), remarked:

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Fresh look at English churches

**TRAPPED IN APARTHEID:
A SOCIO-THEOLOGICAL HISTORY
OF THE ENGLISH SPEAKING
CHURCHES —
CHARLES VILLA-VICENCIO 1988**

New York, Cape town: Orbis books
and David Philip publishers. Pp 250,
appendices, notes and index.
R31,95 Soft Cover Issue).

The roles of Christianity in general and churches in particular with reference to their South African political context have always been a controversial and much written about subject. Charles Villa-Vicencio's *Trapped in Apartheid* represents a fresh — and one dare say, radical — look at the historical role of the institutionalised English-speaking churches. This book indeed offers naught for your comfort.

As an interdisciplinary study the work excels. Firstly, it realistically views the church as "a microcosm of the larger political macrocosm" (p 91). As a socio-historical study it succeeds as a well-researched critical analysis of the English churches' role in the establishment of colonial, and later, apartheid rule. Secondly, it does not protect the churches from criticism of investment in self-interest regarding economic and political power.

In the first part of the book Villa-Vicencio shows clearly that the mainline English churches did not fundamentally challenge colonial and/or minority rule. On the contrary, they contributed to the estab-

lism and apartheid rule.

It is also illustrated that the church rarely opposed capitalist exploitation and paid very little more than lip service to the struggle against apartheid and minority rule. Villa-Vicencio argues that there is "no evidence to suggest that the socio-economic commitment of the English speaking churches was essentially different from that of the Afrikaans churches" (p 86).

If this is not enough to shock the smug Christian, the argument that the English churches were at the least silent observers, if not co-builders to an authoritarian "Theologised Nationalism" (p 140), will certainly do so!

Apart from this and a social analysis derived from Marx and Weber, another essentially positive aspect of the book (part 2) is the new and radical way in which prayer, piety and spiritual involvement is interpreted. Rather than opting for religion equating pathological domination, Villa-Vicencio suggests a liberating ecclesiology. Here religion becomes a deep and continual liberation and force of social renewal. In a sense the book is pastoral guidance for those who experience (or practise) religion as a pathological one-dimensional projection. It establishes a new liberating imperative.

As prognosis Villa-Vicencio believes in a spiritual praxis ("creative sharing, redeeming grace"), grounded in the liberating ecclesiology not only aimed at the poor, but for the poor. The spiritual and horizontal

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