

Fourth Reich blues

LOUIS TRICHARDT is set in the 'real Africa'. It is a bushveld town of mopani and baobab, with the occasional kiepersol, in a landscape of elephant grass and rock and red soil. It nestles against purple mountains of pine and shadows. It happens to be a true 'Voortrekker' bulwark, or perhaps 'Dwarstrekker' bulwark would be a more appropriate description. It was established many years ago, when lion, elephant, buffalo, rhinoceros, and various kind of antelope roamed the plains, and the Boer and Matebele killed each other in great numbers, not to mention nearly annihilating the beasts in unison, and harmony?

It is also a town of extremes. Winter is lovely. While most in South Africa are reaching for electric blankets, warm water bottles, for their wives, this town rejoices in springlike days and cool nights. But then, summer arrives, and the heat is a constant reminder of the concept Abaddon. Thunderstorms luckily intervene on a regular basis, providing some heaven-sent relief, while at the same time destroying crops.

Blame for this latter phenomenon must be allocated, and to whom else but the Government. What with its integration, a flagrant disregard of God's word.

LOUIS TRICHARDT hosts around 9000 pale skinned inhabitants, a big town by South African standards. Most of these souls are pure Afrikaner stock, with pedigrees to match. They come in all shapes and sizes, although an awful lot of men look like honorary members of the Charles Glass society.

Louis Trichardt counts many times more black people. They are only considered part of the town's population for as far as they render services to the cash flow. The same applies to the 'kypies', or coloureds.

The 'kerriegatte', or Indians, pose a problem. They are also not regarded part of the town, yet they own half the real estate. The town council, in its infinite wisdom, once passed a motion that Indians were not allowed to operate businesses in the white area. The ironical, if not comical, result was a fair

number of pure boere flocking across to the shops in the Indian area. Forgotten were the pleas for support to the 'brotherly' white businessmen. These emanated, inter alia, from the ultra conservative dominee. He turned his back on the Dutch Reformed Church, and started his own fire and brimstone version of a holy sect, where a white skin is paramount for membership. He is considered by his many followers to be a true prophet, nearly in the same league as former dominee Andries Treurnicht, and former nobody Eugene Terréblanche.

IN THE entertainment field, a good time is 'boeremusiek' by Oom Japie and his merrimen. The folk dances the 'sakkie-sakkie', a shuffling of feet, which resembles a South African Bureau of Standards test to ascertain the durability of certain brands of footwear. Lots of pugilistic activities in between lighten up proceedings, ek se, to the delightful squeeling of women and girls, and chanting of men and boys. As the evening progresses, and the alcohol flows, hysterical laughter, or gratifying screams, can intermittently be heard, as rear ends and other body parts are squeezed by over zealous young men and 'oomies' alike.

A good time is also Otto Karl's German Oempha band, playing march music. The purists motivate themselves clamorously for the future armed struggle, which will return to the white man the power to absolute rule.

The non-purists, and believers in human equality, more than often stare at themselves in the mirror the next day, asking why they did not speak up, why they even agreed, why they showed no guts.

A MUSICAL performance by Bles used to be the highlight of the year when even ultra conservative tannies behaved like groupies. But then Bles caused terrible pain. He left his lovely wife for a harlot. And was it not he who preached of love, commitment, God and love, in his, oh so very romantic, songs?

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which had been left intact the day before, had been demolished, and the place was in chaos.

People were even more angry, if that was possible, than the day before. They had survived a night, without shelter, in sub-zero temperatures; and now all hope of rebuilding was being removed. They concluded that the members of the security firm were not South Africans, and resented this fiercely. They resented the guns being pointed at them, but most of all they resented their perception that their vision of hope in a new South Africa had been betrayed, and that they were helpless and powerless.

Again, through sheer power of will, they forced the authorities out of the area.

Yes, there were weapons. The police and the municipal police were armed to the hilt. The people armed themselves with sticks and bottles and pieces of aluminium and bricks. Both sides were restrained, and it became obvious that neither side really wanted blood shed. The security forces withdrew, including the security firm which then regrouped on the road and gave a military show which would have done justice to any state occasion. It seemed, for the time being, the people had won.

In a gesture that could only be interpreted as spite, bravado or pure foolishness the municipality then proceeded to demonstrate their supposed power by cutting down trees in the area. Presumably this was to remove all possible reconstruction material. Needless to say

after two or three hot, futile and fruitless hours the plan was abandoned. The "squatters" hung their washing out, and began rebuilding their shacks. Life went on.

WHAT WE need to think about is why and for what purpose are these things happening, and why are we allowing them to happen?

If we are people who care; if we are people who want a new South Africa that is equitable; if we want to change the ravages of the apartheid system which we all, including the government, acknowledge as wrong; can we afford to let our fellow people suffer both by being forced to be perpetrators and being perpetrated against again and again? ●

Also high on the list of popularity, is Danie Botha. He is a true 'boerseun', and perfect husband for a lot of Getruidas and Hetties and Annas. Then there is Carike Keuzenkamp. Her husband is a Nationalist, but she can hardly be held responsible for his ignorance, ek se. Also Ken Mullen. Okay, so he's a 'rooinek', but he surely makes the ovaries flip, from a woman's point of view. And then, the 'Griekse boertjie'. He is a genuine convert to the Afrikaans faith.

The Afrikaans new wave, Johannes Kerkorrel, and the Gereformeerde Blues band, Koos Tonteldoos, Nataniel, etc. are what was termed 'hippie music' a few years ago.

Classical music, 'Bach se gelag', is for most a noise not unlike 'tannie' Annatjie's chickens make, when they realize they're being chased for ultimate feasting purposes. For an elect few, it is cultural enlightenment, to possess classical music, to display it where everybody can see it, never to listen to it.

READING is not a high priority, and that is putting it lightly. It includes the two local newspapers, which are largely anti-government in their approach. For the woman literary works are still Susanna M. Lingua, C.F. Beyers Boshoff, Konsalik, Edgars' newest fashions magazine, Russells' monthly furniture offerings and some articles in the Huisgenoot. Those few ignorami who read the perverse Johannesburg English dailies are automatically communists, atheists or traitors, or a combination of these. Imagine some of the reactions to Andre P. Brink, Etienne le Roux, Breyten Breytenbach etc.

Going to the movies is impossible, the movie house now being a second hand furniture store. There are four video shops. As far as these go, videos in which Arnold Schwarzenegger, Rambo, Claude van Damme, or lately George Segal, display their pugilistic prowess will always be popular. The more gore, the merrier.

Theatre is a visit by Mike Schutte, or Martino, or the Alabama student choir. "Hey, ek se, old Mike can not only wrestle, he tells lekker jokes too, huh?" "That Martino is a genius. How else can he shoot that chick from the canon into the kas?"

Dining out is the Spur, for a kingklip measuring ten by ten centimetres (it lost some of its juice en route), or 'Oom'

Kallie's Chinese take-away, with a variety of dishes that 'skrik vir niks'.

FOR THE 'true liberals', there is the Bergwater Hotel, with an owner who admittedly votes National Party. The hotel is theoretically open to all races. In practice, a coloured person will not enter the public bar, not unless he wants to get seriously hurt by the blue blooded 'Afrikaner seuns' who frequent the place. The a la Carte restaurant is also not open for coloured people, by management order. If a coloured person should want to stay for the night, a room, separate from those of the white people, will be allocated.

Politics for most is hating anybody who differs with the Conservative Party, Jaap Marais, the AWB, or in the case of the Wit Wolwe, if you can find them. The fraternity that beds black women now and then, write it off as a little indiscretion, and keep it secret at all costs. Often the same people boast about how many 'swartgatte' they nearly killed, and describe in detail what the black's fate will still be.

Politics is also big 'Afrikaner seuns' hitting small black Sunday school children having a picnic in a park, with sjamboks. The excuse for this action; they will grow up to be terrorists one day.

Political rallies are a chance for the guys, especially those with 'kwaai vrouens', to break away for a while.

CONCLUSION:

PERHAPS, I have not presented a balanced picture of Louis Trichardt. This is not for lack of trying. The simple fact is that, the more I searched for this balanced picture, the more worms I uncovered.

I do not for one moment suggest that Louis Trichardt has not got any decent and clear-thinking people. There are indeed a lot. Unfortunately, they are more than often overrun. I believe the Afrikaans proverbs apply. 'n Stil bek is 'n heel bek' and 'Liewer bang Jan as dooie Jan.'

Finally a reminder, albeit clichéd: A small rotten spot on an apple will eventually spread, and decay will set in over the whole apple. The fruit will have to be thrown away. Louis Trichardt, and a lot of corresponding towns, especially in the Transvaal, have grown alarmingly big rotten spots. ●

— JOHAN G.C. PIEK

FAMINE

WE DID not realise that we were to witness a famine. It was 1974, a few short years after the emergence of the state of Bangladesh. The country was still grappling with staggering problems inherited from colonial times including the disastrous 1947 partition of the Indian subcontinent into a disparate Moslem nation of two widely separated parts — Western and Eastern Pakistan — and the largely Hindu India. The eastern wing which comprised most of the former Bengal was to last just 23 years before it seceded from Pakistan after a bitter and bloody liberation struggle. But in early 1974 relief operations were giving way to development

projects and various specialised agencies were arriving. That was why we were there — to assist the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute in developing the technology for greater food production.

We were living in Dhaka and slowly coming to terms with the pervasive poverty which reached right up to our garden walls. Clusters of emaciated families living in the streets. Solitary women with baby on hip begging for food. Swarms of beggars on street corners, at traffic lights and on river ferries pleading for alms from travellers

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trapped and vulnerable in their cars and rickshaws. The ghastly, misshapen bodies of children deliberately maimed at birth crawling or wheeled in carts chanting for baksheesh. Gaunt figures straining every fibre as they pedalled rickshaws overloaded with people or goods for a daily pittance. Long queues of the poor squatting patiently in the road for a meal of rice and vegetables offered by a sympathetic Bengali family. Children, scrawny cattle and wretched pyedogs scratching and sniffing together through piles of garbage tipped on vacant lots. This was the reality of Dhaka, this was the normal situation.

BUT IT was to get much worse. As the famine took hold and people in the countryside were denied even a

