

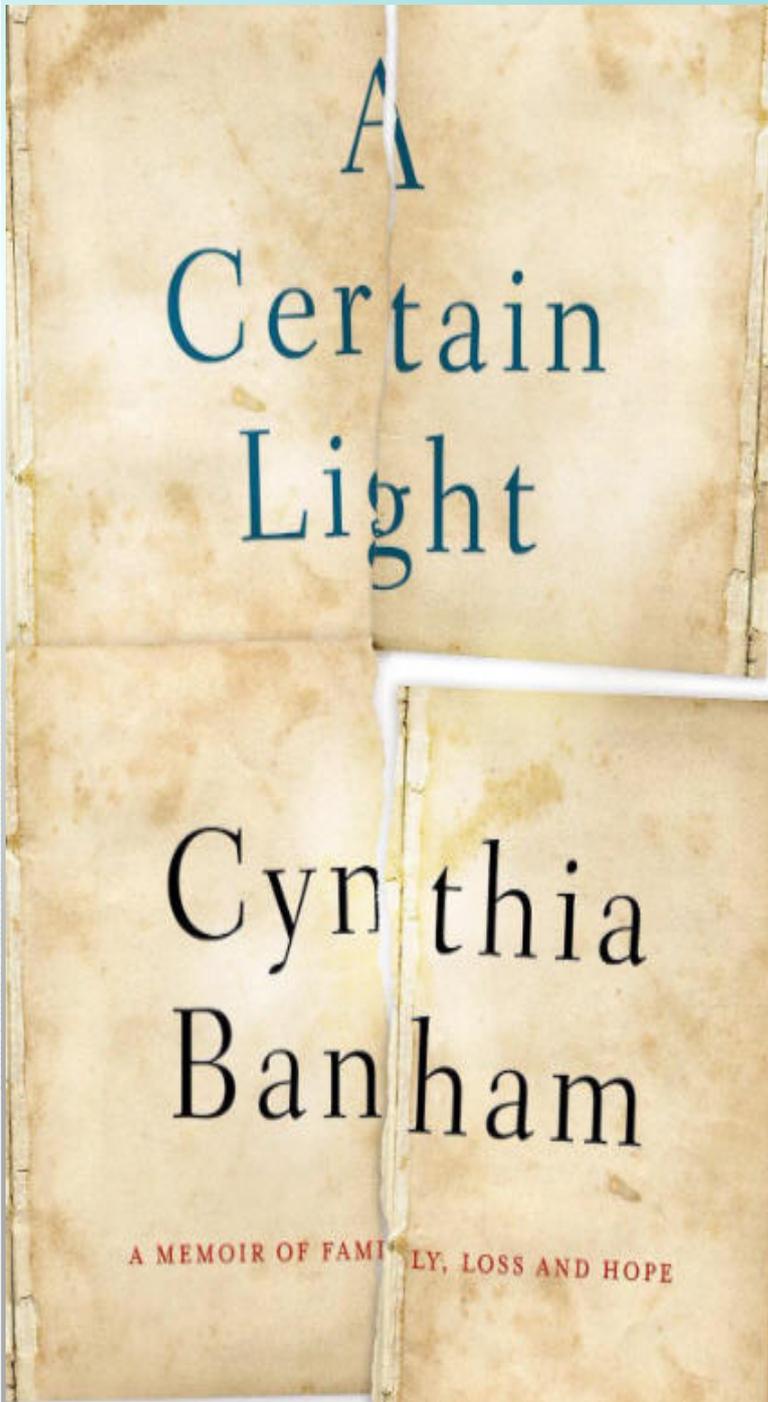
Cat's Eye Watch

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Edited by Graham A. Price



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Love Never Dies: Chapter 2

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Any excuse for stirring up the universe

Edited by
Graham A. Price

Once was weekly now highly irregular in more ways than one

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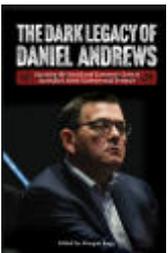
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The editor's desk



The festering sore that is anti-Semitism has been hiding in the depths of humanity's collective mind ever since 1945. When society fails in its achievements and the resulting guilt that comes with it, there has to be someone or something to blame, and society as it has done for thousands of years picks the easy way out — blame the Jews. Never blame oneself or the present ruling government! And when they come for the Jews, who do you think they come for next?

Can life begin again at 90? Yes, it can. You might wonder why Holocaust survivors are still going strong into their nineties, some still taking on new activities. Surely Holocaust survivors can't do that? Well, they can, and it's mostly due to not having an easy life — everything has been a struggle in which they have developed a strong will to live on, in spite of what has happened to them. They've seen hell — suffered abominably, been there, done that against everything thrown at them. Apart from diabolical diseases and debilitating accidents, many Australians in their 60's-70s, who don't have the strength to go out and just get on with life, have led a cushy kind of youthful years, so that when misfortune comes all they can say is 'Why me?' Holocaust survivors don't do that — they might talk about their experiences if prompted hard enough, but they won't let them control their life.

Yes, even 90 can be a time of creative regeneration. Some folks look upon those twilight days as a time of rest and less action. But others don't. Eddie Jaku didn't, whose book I reviewed in *Cat's Eye Weekly* No. 141 2nd January 2022. Eddie wrote his book *The Happiest Man on Earth* when he was 90, in which, having survived the Holocaust, he set into print: "It was then that Eddie realised he had lost everything — his parents, his dignity. Everything was stripped away from him. He lined up for his tattoo and received a number on his arm that would last forever: 172338. He had no other identity but that. Everything about his former life was gone, totally demolished. How to survive? First of all, do not fall because if you fall you will be immediately shot. All inmates were under armed guard and one never knew if one was to return to one's bed at night." The odds were totally weighed against him in the death camp of Auschwitz, but he made it out, migrated to Australia and was successful in business. He went on to live to 101, still active, still planning, still with a happy smile on his face.

Cynthia Banham was a solicitor turned journalist, who suffered the loss of two legs below the knee, a partial loss of one arm together with 60% of her body burnt during an aircraft crash in Indonesia. Against all the odds, including near death experiences several times, she survived to marry and give birth to a son. Her story is depicted in *A Certain Light*, published by Allen & Unwin in 2018 — a story of suffering, hope, and renewal which she wrote for her son, Leo. Banham viewed the birth of her son as compensation for her sufferings. Her experience prompted her to look back in time to those family members who had come before her, and who also had suffered, but had clung on to hope, with much determination and courage. In doing so she found her own way back from the near dead. I reviewed *A Certain Light* in *Cat's Eye Weekly*, edition No. 139, 1 Oct 2021 and have included it in this edition. See page 6.

Take care, be safe, *Graham*

Feedback to Cat's Eye Weekly & Cat's Eye Watch
is always welcome.

Click onto my purrfect nose!





The evil some would rather not see

The days were coming up fast, leading on toward Christmas, with folks out and about buying gifts, arranging holidays — the rush was on. For Jewish folk of Australia it was Hanukkah in December 2025, the Festival of Light; a time for celebrating a 2000 year-old Jewish custom lasting for eight days.

A time of joy, the feasting of traditional foods, and the lighting of each candle night after night on the Menorah—a candelabrum with four candles each side of a centre piece, from which the others are lit.

But while over one thousand people of Jewish descent were commencing celebrations in the early evening at Bondi Beach, Sydney, others were planning something utterly devious — after shooting Boris and Sofia Gurman who were preparing to tackle the the two armed men on the footpath, the men carried several guns between them onto an elevated bridge and opened fire on the crowd from that heightened position.

Australia had not seen anything like it, apart from the Port Arthur massacre in Tasmania 1996 when a single man opened fire and killed 35 people, leaving 18 wounded. This was now a terror of the most grievous kind with 15 dead including a 10-year-old child, and 40 wounded.

Almost instantly a hero emerged — Ahmed al-Ahmed, a Syrian-born Australian fruit shop owner and father of two, who launched himself onto the younger of the attackers — Naveed Akram — and wrestled the shotgun from him. As the stunned terrorist backed away, then running toward the bridge to retrieve another weapon, Ahmed was apparently shot twice by Sajid, the father of Naveed, firing from cover of the bridge. Ahmed the hero survived and undoubtedly prevented at least another ten to fifteen more people from being killed.

The elder of the pair, Sajid Akram, was then shot and killed by Detective Senior Constable Cesar Barraza who was firing from his police issue pistol while only partially protected by the trunk of a tree. Sajid Akram's son Naveed had retrieved another firearm from the bridge and commended firing again into the crowd. Shortly after, he was wounded by police and taken into custody.



A blurred picture of Naveed Akram shooting from Bondi Beach bridge. Picture ABC News.



Victim: 10-year-old Matilda "Bee." Picture CNN News via family hand-out.

This was a situation that Australia was not prepared for — the prevailing attitude being that these things happen overseas, but surely, not here. No, apart from the Port Arthur massacre decades ago, not here! Ten-year-old Matilda — nicknamed Matilda Bee — was loving school. Her father had apparently covered his wife to save her from the bullets, but he could not save himself or Matilda.

Matilda! You couldn't get a name more Aussie than that, could you? She had been nick-named Matilda Bee and had been happy to have been announced the winner of a national literacy prized just two days before she died. A school spokesperson said that Matilda had an incredible gift to bring joy to those around her.

Matilda's funeral was highlighted with pictures of bumblebees, and mourners were handed stickers featuring a smiling cartoon bumblebee holding a menorah. Matilda's aunt Lina had said: "Take your anger and... just spread happiness and love and memory for my lovely niece,"

Rabbi Ulman whose son-in-law, Rabbi Eli Schlanger, was also killed in the attack on Bondi, spoke at Matilda's funeral: "The tragic, so totally cruel, unfathomable murder of young Matilda is something to all of us as if our own daughter was taken from us. The Jewish believe that death is not eternal; it is not because we are naïve."

Among the dead was an 87-year-old Holocaust survivor, Alexander Kleytman. He died protecting his wife, Larisa, from the gunmen's bullets. To have survived the unspeakable horrors of the Holocaust only to be brought down in a democratic country such as Australia defies belief. ABC News reported: "His daughter Hanna Abesidon spoke at



A tribute to Matilda. Picture: The Times of Israel.



his funeral and said his love for his family was constant, unconditional and deeply felt . . . 'I'm so sorry I couldn't save you. I'm so sorry,' she said." •



Islamic State: Wounded but still operative

Despite being almost eradicated in Iraq and Syria by the US led coalition 2014-2017, Islamic State (ISIS), previously known as al Qaeda, still functions. *The Global Terrorism Index* for 2025 reveals that the terrorist group ISIS is active as a Sunni inspired Islamist group, the aim of which is to bring the whole world into a Caliphate under their rule.

It is staggering to learn that during 2017-2024 ISIS was responsible for an estimated 40,000 deaths, far higher than the Taliban with approximately 14,000 deaths. Since 2024 ISIS and other terrorist groups have recovered somewhat, using ransoms, kidnapping, extortion, finance by illegal oil operations, donations, and Bitcoin transfers which are viewed as being Halal (permissible under Islamic law) because Bitcoin is only numbers. This kind of virtual asset is preferred due to the possibility of couriers being caught with large amounts of cash in their possession. There is also revenue from robberies and the spoils of war.

ISIS is most active in Africa, but has spread its talons by undercover activity and disinformation in Russia and other European countries. The main focus is no longer primarily the Middle East, but has switched to East Asia, including the Philippines and Australia, where Islamist sympathetic groups — including some Muslim preachers — proselytise hardline ideologies in favour of Islamist beliefs.

On the rise again, ISIS distributes English-speaking propaganda videos to recruit sympathisers. The videos are of first class production with much appeal to those living in Western countries who are dissatisfied with governments and the manner in which local culture is disseminated. Those with a gripe concerning the country they emigrated to, or those born on home grounds within such a family, are susceptible targets for the promises given in the ISIS propaganda videos. These videos highlight that violence is acceptable against the unbeliever because it is in the name of the higher cause.

In 2020 the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reported on a horde of online digital series discovered by researchers at the Institute of Strategic Dialogue (ISD). ISD found a digital library on the internet containing more than 90,000 items which had an estimated 10,000 visitors every month. One video showed pop singer Justin Bieber being used to promote ISIS propaganda material.



Source: Politico



View online at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-54011034>

In an article [edited] published September 2024 in the *Humanities and Social Sciences Journal: Decoding the media strategy of ISIS*, it is stated “The prevalence of enemy narratives in ISIS propaganda creates a stark ‘us versus them’ dichotomy . . . ISIS portrays itself as the ‘good’—upholders of Sharia [law] and the true path of jihad—while anyone opposing them is depicted as the ‘evil’ doomed to fail due to their disbelief . . . ISIS ideologues use theological language to assert that the group is on a divine mission, with violent jihad being the sole path to rectify the world. They claim to be guided by a ‘prophetic methodology,’ deriving their understanding from the Quran [Koran] and Sunnah [the way of the Prophet], and present their jihadists as ‘lions of the caliphate’ and ‘warriors in upholding the rules of God’ (Gerges, 2016; Mahood and Rane, 2016). This religious narrative is fundamental in legitimising ISIS’s actions and in recruiting followers by weaving theological justifications into its narrative framework.”

The evidence is out there that these ISIS inspired videos rely upon emotive factors and dedication not only to Sharia law, but to a world wide Caliphate of Islamic extremism. The end justifies the means.

The father and son terrorists who carried out the Bondi Beach massacre in New South Wales on 14 December 2025 had been influenced by ISIS propaganda. Apart from other evidence, an ISIS flag was found to be in their possession. It is frightening to realise that between 2012 and 2019 over 200 Australians migrated to the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria in support of ISIS, so how many sympathetic followers remain languishing like a time bomb within the bounds of Australia these days?

Lauren Williams of the Lowy Institute, comments on Islamic State: “Islamic State has a clearly defined strategy to manipulate the Western media to serve its propaganda objectives. It seeks to enlist the media to help it disseminate its key messages. Because of the dangers of sending its own reporters into Syria and Iraq, the media has become dependent on Islamic State material. The newsworthiness and shock value of Islamic State’s acts mean it will continue to command coverage and attention. Political leaders, community representatives, and media outlets that talk up the threat posed by Islamic State also help the group to achieve its propaganda goals. In particular, inflammatory reporting about the Muslim community in the context of terrorism has also had a polarising effect, reinforcing Islamic State’s messages.”

ISIS has been known to infiltrate Twitter (now X) and Tik Tok. There were 24 Tik Tok accounts that spread ISIS propaganda. ISIS has even disseminated propaganda information on Youtube and Telegram.

ISIS will continue to remain a savage threat. An Oxford academic study of 2020 concluded “ISIS relies on its online media campaign to spread its ideology worldwide, radicalize populations globally, recruit new members, raise funds, and inspire supporters to perpetrate their own attacks. In other words, ISIS depends on its online activities to maintain and expand its territory.” •



The Animal Rehoming Service



Update: I'm still looking for a loving home!

Louie is a 6 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 29kg Labrador x Beagle who's looking for a loving home.

He's an affectionate and happy boy who would love to be a treasured member of the family. Louie's also an active boy so would suit a family, happy to walk /exercise him daily.

His favourite things are cuddling up to his favourite humans, getting tummy rubs, running along the beach and playing fetch.

Louie would be fine as an only pet if he had some human company during the day. Otherwise a home with another dog or cat would also suit. (He's happily lived with both).

He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Louie's adoption fee is \$450. Microchip Number: 956000011141358. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Cheltenham based, but we go to you).

The aim of argument should be, not victory, but progress.

Karl Popper



When the real bad things come

A Certain Light

Surviving a plane crash when your body is broken and your mind is in utter terror, and the nagging thought comes ‘what have I done to deserve this?’ And you are all alone with your frightening, soul savaging thoughts.

The doctor’s notebook reads: “A 34-year-old patient was transferred to Royal Perth Hospital after sustaining 60% TBSA [total body surface area] full-thickness burns in a plane crash . . . Escharotomies of the lower limbs and left hand were attempted at a local hospital prior to transfer. On presentation to RPH there were circumferential full-thickness burns to both legs and the whole of the left upper limb, and patchy full-and partial-thickness burns to the back and abdomen. Traumatic injuries included fractures of the vertebral body of L1 and left transverse process of L2, and traumatic pancreatitis.

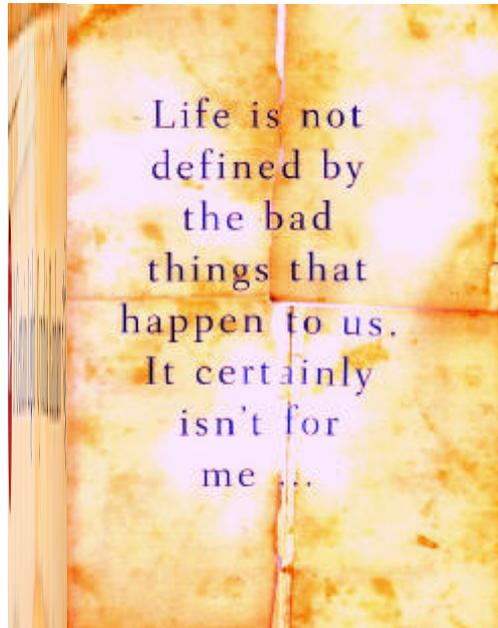
“The patient’s feet and left hand were pale, cold and ischemic, therefore complete escharotomies, fasciotomies and vigorous burns scrubbing and lavage were [performed] urgently in theatre. Gram’s stain of tissue showed mixed bacteria and intravenous (IV) meropenem was started empirically. The patient was transferred to the intensive care unit, but developed signs of progressive wound sepsis with new expanding areas of necrosis, a vesiculo-bullous rash extending past burnt tissue and progressive myonecrosis; requiring multiple extensive debridements on days 2 and 3 post-admission, including left above knee and right below knee amputations.”

60 per cent of her body surface was completely burnt, gone. The patient, Cynthia Banham, has written *A Certain Light* — a memoir to her young son — when at the time of commencement of writing he had just turned three on the 17th February 2015. The plane crash occurred in Indonesia 2007. The surgeon who eventually treated Cynthia was Dr. Fiona Wood, who while Cynthia was being medivac’d out of Indonesia to Perth, Australia, was flying to Indonesia to treat other victims of the airline crash. When she returned from Indonesia she saw Cynthia when other doctors had taken the dressings down to change them.

‘I smelt you from the hall . . . something is wrong . . .!’ “Fiona took down my dressings again and says my flesh was melting. ‘It was a flesh-eating infection, your skin melted under my touch.’ If Fiona hadn’t have walked in, hadn’t taken down my dressings at that moment, I would have died then too . . . [simply one of several almost deaths]. Fiona had to keep two teams of doctors all working at the same time [in theatre] because the infection was eating me up so fast they couldn’t keep up with it.”

To save her life, and to put it bluntly, the surgeons chopped off both her legs — one below the knee and one above the knee. There was no choice. Either that or die. Physiotherapists later referred to Cynthia’s residual limbs as ‘stumps’, but she refuses to call them that, instead referring to them as her ‘leg rest’. At times she thought there was nothing much left of her. Cynthia Banham—solicitor turned journalist, world traveller, covering terrorist bombings in Tanzania; loving Nepal, Tibet, Iraq, was suddenly no longer that person. “At what point would they remove so much of me that I would cease to be human?” Cynthia writes about survival, regardless of what the odds are against you. Surviving from what was close to being a vegetable, Cynthia determined the massive trauma she had gone through was not going to beat her.

On the slow and utterly painful road to some kind of recovery, it occurred to Cynthia that previous folk in her family had been through trauma. Returning home to Canberra in 2015 she was checking out stored boxes. Among them was a small box containing her Italian grandparents’ papers. She discovered that after the Italian armistice in 1943 her grandfather Alfredo — at the age of nineteen — had been captured by German soldiers and sent to POW camp in Austria/Germany for two years and sentenced to forced labour. She also discovered that her great aunt Amelia was a hero who smuggled food to the camp under the noses of the Germans and sacrificed her virginity to a German





commander so as to continue to support the prisoners. There were photographs in the box — one was the entrance to a POW camp, and the entrance appeared to be Auschwitz, though it turned out to be another.

Cynthia had found a poem in the old box — a poem written by an unknown author, which described conditions in the camp. Part of it reads:

with calluses on your hands
broken shoes on your feet
lost and without love
foreign children who pass
why do you deny us a smile
when will it be over
this wicked stubbornness
and a steamed machine
that will take us home
we want our homes
and a hug from mum

Researching further, Cynthia discovered that Amelia had died in America at the age of 42, of brain and lung cancer, the same age as Cynthia when she began to research Amelia's life. Amelia had 'accidentally' fallen for work in a restaurant which was run by an Italian Mafia boss. His cruelty to her meant that her life rapidly went downhill. She suffered numerous beatings that were so bad she had to be hospitalised. Cynthia, with her severe burns and loss of legs, considered that Amelia had suffered more than she.

Cynthia's partner, Michael, stood by her during her days of utter despair and her thoughts about not recovering her former life. She was never going to be her former self — never going to be the same body because there were large chunks of her that were unrecognisable. In spite of all that she had been through, Cynthia said to Michael "I've been having a bit of bad luck." One of the most fabulous understatements of the century! A bit of bad luck! Michael's faith in Cynthia was strong and it wasn't all that long until he said to her mind, body and soul: "Marry me!"

And the little boy who has come from this union knows so deep within his heart that he has the best mother and father in the universe. •

***A Certain Light* By Cynthia Banham**
Allen & Unwin large paperback
\$AUD32.99
A necessity on your bookshelf



The end of Garuda flight 200, 7th March 2007 at Yogyakarta airport
Picture credit Alamy.com



A storm in the Grass Roots Garden



The original cartoon in *The Age* and *The Sydney Morning Herald*

The Age newspaper published a cartoon by Cathy Wilcox, which numerous folk in Australia took exception to. At the head of this possible outrage was the previous long-time chief editor of *The Age*, Michael Gawenda. His reaction was published in *The Australian* of Jan 10-11 2026.

He wrote: “So it has come to this at *The Age*, the paper at which I worked for many decades and edited for seven years.

“The cartoon called ‘Grass Roots’ depicts a bunch of silly looking people calling for a royal commission into anti-Semitism. I assume they are meant to represent the families of the dead, the lawyers and judges and business leaders and sporting greats who had urged the government to act before the Prime Minister came to understand that his legacy would be

tarnished if he did not listen to these Australians and on Thursday announced that there would be a royal commission into anti-semitism and social cohesion, though he was not asked by any journalist what exactly he meant by social cohesion, as if the meaning of this cliché is obvious.

“In the Wilcox cartoon there is a dog standing beside these Australians and the dog is holding a sign calling for a royal commission. The dog has a thought bubble and he is thinking ‘Don’t mention the war.’ These Australians, leading figures in the law and in business and sporting greats, are standing on grass that is held up by sinister-looking people — John Howard, Jacinta Nampijinpa Price, and someone I assume who is Rupert Murdoch, and other demons of the anti-Zionist left — and beside them stands Benjamin Netanyahu playing boom-boom on a drum.”

There is much more, but Gawenda concludes with asking the Jews among whom he was raised — most of them left-wing Labor — what they think of the cartoon, which was published less than a month after the Bondi Beach terrorist massacre of Jews. His final words are that too many journalists and cartoonists consider themselves as activists, writing and drawing what they please, regardless of any institutional damage caused by publication. So, why did a cartoon such as this slip past the editors? Gawenda is saddened.

The inference of the cartoon is that only people with right-wing views would call for a royal commission into a massacre of innocent people, and if that is so, then Wilcox has got it all wrong and she is using the cartoon to express her ‘hate’ for middle of the road and right-wing folk.

9 Media apologised for the cartoon, stating that it was divisive and hurtful, and reaction from readers was mixed — for and against — with Pia Brous of Armadale (*The Age* Jan 8) attacking and giving three reasons by the cartoon was disgraceful i.e, 1. The cartoon “Implies the calls for a royal commission after the Bondi massacre is a machination of Benjamin Netanyahu. 2. “It implies that a malign external power is behind the calls for a royal commission.” 3. That the cartoon depicts “the ancient antisemitic trope that international Jews are interfering with local politics. This is blatant antisemitic racism.” Similar wordage is used by Mark Shenken of Balaclava, Jon McMillan of Mornington, and Andrew Komesaroff of Caulfield, while on January 13 Peter Semple of Campbells Creek who states he has been an *Age* reader for 50 years writes “The *Age* says in its editorial (12/2) ‘Wilcox and other cartoonists must be allowed to draw the world as they see it . . . So what precisely are you apologising for? Never have I pressured The *Age* to apologise for free speech and I never will.’ ”

Phil Bodel of Ocean Grove writes “I am offended by *The Age’s* cowardly editorial. So much for free speech. I support Cathy Wilcox.” There is more of the same — the readers are divided.

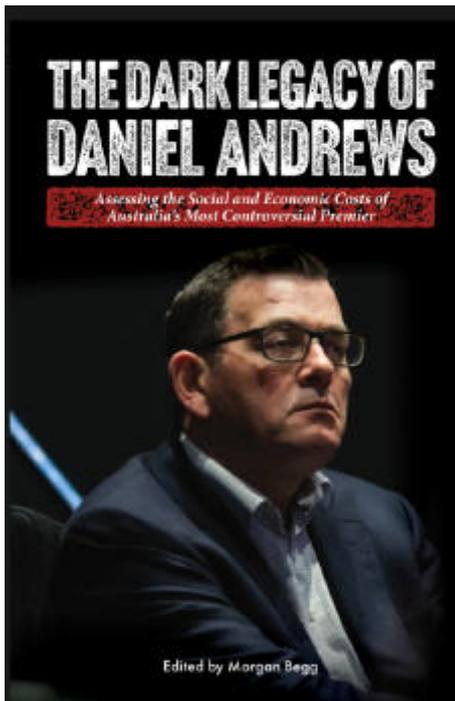
But Catherine West who is the immediate past chairperson of Nine media, writing in *The Australian* January 12, puts her finger on the pulse. “I am not Jewish. In my view the cartoon is deeply problematic. It depicted those calling for a royal commission into anti-Semitism as unwitting puppets manipulated by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu through Coalition politicians . . . Let me be clear: being against anti-Semitism does not mean you support Netanyahu . . . Fifteen people were murdered at Bondi Beach on December 14. More than 40 people were hospitalised. Families were shattered. Countless people were traumatised. In that immediate aftermath, the cartoon suggested that those calling for action against anti-Semitism were essentially dupes in a foreign influence operation . . . Until we can clearly distinguish between domestic prejudice and international politics, we will remain trapped in a silence that deliberately, or naively, allows anti-Semitism to flourish. The royal commission must help us to break that silence.” •

“Yesterday I was clever, so I wanted to change the world. Today I am wise, so I am changing myself.”

Jalal al-Din Rumi , Persian poet and mystic.



THE TYRANNY OF ONE



The previous premier of Victoria's legacy is one of disaster for the state, with out-of-control projects, a debt that will rise to approximately \$230 billion within a few years and a legacy of leaving Victoria with a government bureaucracy swollen out to a massive increase from 51% since 2015 to 57,345 in 2024.

Morgan Begg has gathered nine economists and renowned journalists to explain how Daniel Andrews' abuse of power came to be accepted by not only his inner circle of politicians, but also by the wider general public. It became a matter of 'you got what you voted for' and the public quite happily snoozed through three elections while Andrews was thumbing his nose at the electors and very smartly cuddling up to Communist China.

Peter Jennings — executive director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) 2012-2022 — writes that Andrews' dream "was to encourage trade and investment between Victoria and the wealthy, authoritarian People's Republic of China (PRC). Beijing would provide the economic engine for Andrews' ambitious but unfunded infrastructure plans, enabling his political focus on jobs and growth. China's leader, Xi Jinping, had his own China dream: to make his country globally dominant by 2050. Achieving that dream required weakening the world's democracies and building economic dependence on China. What unfolded was a tale of Australian

greed, naivety and stubbornness, manipulated by the PRC following its own strategic agenda."

Andrews wasn't alone in this dream — in 2013 Tony Abbott declared that his government was open for business — with China trade booming at the time. Andrews' strategy was different, based on half-truths, and Jennings points out that the Andrews government "was unburdened by the necessary knowledge, or responsibility, to really understand who they were dealing with in China." Necessary knowledge of [Australian] defence, national security, and foreign policy was sidelined. No concern of Andrews and his Victorian government.

Under the heading of **Nightmares began to take over**, Jennings brings up what became known as the Dastyari affair. "The Dastyari affair pointed to a substantial Chinese covert operation to suborn Australian politicians with financial donations, often from mysterious Chinese business figures recently resident in Australia . . . Donors poured over \$5.5 million into Liberal and Labor parties . . . In 2017 the Federal LNP government declined a Chinese request to sign up to its 'Belt and Road' initiative." But in spite of this, Andrews was doubling-up on his strategy to invite Chinese investment in Victoria, while at the same time appealing to the large Australian Chinese vote. Jennings notes that after Andrews' 2017 visit to China and Hong Kong and with the signing of an agreement with China's National Development and Reform Commission, Andrews directed that the Victorian Public Service would work more closely with the Hong Kong officials of the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) while undoubtedly being aware of the almost total control the Communist Party of China (CCP) has over the BRI.

Jennings' nineteen-page article alone is enough to kill off any suggestion that Andrews was acting in the safe interest of Victoria, or for that matter, the wider population of Australia. In a very short time, Andrews became known as 'Chairman Dan' for his dictatorial control. Jennings dives deep into Andrews' dealings with Xi Jinping's China, which is enough to send gigantic shivers down our spines.

The Dark Legacy of Daniel Andrews is about absolute power at work, where Victorian Labor party members were sidelined by the premier. Scott Hargreaves — Executive Director of the Institute of Public Affairs — writes that "Andrews had intimidated and then suborned the media through the device of daily press conferences at which only members of the supine Parliamentary Press Gallery were made welcome, and which were live-streamed." *The Age* journalists at the time stated "*The Age* has examined how power is wielded in this state. For anyone who values Westminster notions of how government decisions should be made, the findings are confronting." The fact is that Andrews was using the very same tactics that US president Donald Trump has used to keep much of the free press out of White House briefings. The similarity is staggering.

Hargreaves wields a sword when he writes: " 'Fear and silence' was maintained by ruthless overlordship of his [Andrews'] own party, policing of social media by an army of Danbots (so-called, though not automated but definitely anonymous and hence better referred to as sockpuppets) and the organised #IStandWithDan campaign, and



a complicit media which has benefited from the propaganda campaign by dint of being (for the first time in decades) a prime conduit of information to the public “

Hargreaves mentions Victoria's first female Ombudsman, Deborah Glass*, who, after noting that there was no press release from the government at the time of her appointment, said “I was offended, it was complete radio silence . . . and this was from a government that put out a press statement to announce the opening of an envelope.”

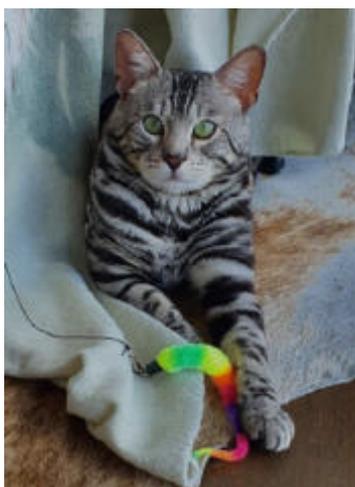
There is no doubt that a majority of writers for *The Dark Legacy of Daniel Andrews* are from a right-wing perspective and may be accused of bias, but there are important questions that require answers and regardless of political influence, must be taken seriously. For instance, Brianna McKee tackles ‘Social engineering in Victoria's failing education system’, which under the banner of Daniel Andrews' government, enacted the Safe Schools agenda, with the public being told it was to curb bullying within schools — initially conceived by a previous Labor premier, John Brumby. Your editor was aware of a video by the then La Trobe University's Roz Ward, co-founder of Safe Schools. In that video Ward clearly stated that Safe Schools was not about bullying, it was about ‘being transgender, about being lesbian, gay, bisexual’. Ward is a self-proclaimed Marxist and has repeatedly said she will not rest until the Red Flag is flying over parliament. *The Dark Legacy of Daniel Andrews* p74: “While proponents claims Safe Schools was a benign anti-bullying programme that would help teachers foster a safe and supportive environment, it was revealed in 2016 that this ‘Safe and supporting environment’ entailed connecting students to pornographic websites, adult shops and swingers' clubs. It was also linked to several alternative adult online communities and organisations that hosted hands-on sexuality classes.” CEW asks: “Parents, did your children have access to this?”

In 2017 the following Australian states withdrew from or banned Safe Schools: New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). Safe Schools remains within the Victorian education system. Andrews and his successor, Jacinta Allan, would have it no other way.

Further chapters in *The Dark Legacy of Daniel Andrews* are: **Trashing the rule of law** — with impunity: The erosion of criminal justice in Victoria; **Point of no return?** The chronic mismanagement of Victoria's finances; **Liberties lost:** The assault on Victoria's freedoms; **Failure on every front:** The economic legacy of Victoria's Covid-era decisions; **Unions empowered:** Cost blowouts and delays in Victoria's public service and major projects; **All eggs in one basket:** The deliberate undermining of Victoria's energy security.

In 2020, due to poor economic management, Victoria lost its AAA grade rating by Standard & Poors, down to AA. Although Victoria's huge debt is 42% owned by Australian banks, in recent times the state has relied on heavy foreign lenders via government bonds. The interest rates alone would be staggering. Standard & Poors and Moody's have recently warned the Victorian government that if spending is not reined in, the state may lose it's AA rating. •

* See *Cat's Eye Watch* No. 10, November 2025, page 32 at <https://www.catseyewatch.com>



Summary: Macaroni Bob.
 Breed: Bengal. Age: 2 years and 6 months old.
 Gender: Male. Microchip Number: 956000018842876.
 Source Code: BR100934
 Pick up Peninsula. \$400, includes vaccination.
 Info: <https://rspcavic.org/adopt-a-pet/?petId=1014647>

Wire

Women's Information Referral Exchange

One in three calls WIRE receives from women are related to family violence. Wire: 372 Spencer Street, West Melbourne 3003. Telephone Support Service Line 1300 134 130 Mon-Fri 9.00-5.00. <http://www.wire.org.au/>

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Adelaide Writer's Festival Shut Down



Barry Humphries. Photo: TEG Dainty

They loved our Australian national treasure Barry Humphries — this strange and often weird festival that only a nervous state such as South Australia could promote.

Oh, it's a died-in-the-wool Australian culture event, isn't it—the Adelaide Festival? It's where the hairy and not so hairy oh so very cultured, and sometimes rabid animals, assemble each year to pontificate and listen to themselves.

Humphries had a close relationship with the earlier Adelaide festival and associated arts venues of that pleasant winery hiccup state, until heaven forbid, his death came about in 2023. But dear readers, it was the Melbourne Comedy Festival that took his name off an award in 2019. Ah, it was Victoria, that narrow-minded provincial state!

At the time, Humphries' dear friend Miriam Margolyes said that Humphries was "very hurt and saddened by what happened after the Melbourne festival." Film director Bruce Beresford said the decision to remove Humphries' name from the award was "a disgrace." The MCF people denied the accusations, but try as they might, they couldn't erase what they had done and the Adelaide organisers grinned from ear to ear at the seemingly pompous and straight-jacketed Victorian state, until now.

It's as if an atomic bomb has gone off in Adelaide! The writer's festival is a shambles and the ghost of Barry Humphries would be weeping at the idiocy that has occurred. And it's not an argument over culture, it's one that should not be — of politics and race, would you believe it! Step carefully here, my bosom friends, because there are hidden grenades attached to this happening.

So, what was the trigger point that caused this havoc? It revolved around the board dis-inviting Palestinian activist Dr. Randa Abdel-Fattah who is the recipient of an \$870,000 Australian Research Council grant. Abdel-Fattah was in Adelaide to promote her book *Discipline*, which is the story of a student at an Islamic school who is charged with terrorism offences because of protesting against arms manufacturers. Abdel-Fattah's banishing came about due to perceived past social media posts which include "Zionists have . . . no claim to cultural safety," and on Oct 8 2023 she changed her social media public image to a Hamas terrorist paraglider. She also described Hamas terrorists as "Palestinian fighters who broke out of their 16-year hostage conditions." Abdel-Fattah has also been filmed leading children chanting "intifada" on the lawns of the University of Sydney. These statements and incidents are seen to be abhorrent by the Australian Jewish community and vented by Abdel-Fattah under the banner of free speech. There is a belief that Abdel-Fattah's past statements are anti-Semitic in nature.



Pix The Conversation via Maquarie University



Dr. Randa Abdel-Fattah. Pix Sydney Morning Herald

Natasha Bitu, Education Editor for *The Australian* newspaper has written: "A taxpayer-sponsored activist has described an image glorifying the Hamas attack on Israel as portraying a 'moment of freedom' for Gaza, while doubling down on her demands for the 'end of Israel.'" It seems Abdel-Fattah is now relaying to the news media that she has no idea that the provocative picture remained on her Facebook page for at least five months, long after Hamas and other Palestinian terrorists raped, killed, and then kidnapped more than 1200 Jews, numerous of which then died in captivity under the control of Hamas within their deep underground tunnels.

Abdel-Fattah recently wrote an essay in which she stated "As a Palestinian fighting for my people's freedom, I am part of a decolonial anti-racism, anti-imperial liberation struggle . . . a decolonised Palestine is about dismantling the colonial state apparatus and restoring the land from the river to the sea, where everybody lives in Palestine, free and equal." Dr. Abdel-Fattah stands by all of her statements.



Members of the Adelaide Writers Festival board eventually considered that due to the closeness of the Bondi Beach massacres, inviting Abdel-Fattah was insensitive and would not be wise. Director Louise Adler came back with “It’s too late. I’ve already invited her.” Things came to a head when the premier of South Australia, Peter Malinauskus, wrote to the board with his concerns, but in no way suggesting that he was ordering the board to dump Abdel-Fattah.

The bombshell dropped with Abdel-Fattah being dis-invited, causing at least 180 writers — some of Australia’s best known — to quit the festival in support of Abdel-Fattah; then the board disintegrated and was abandoned, and finally Dr. Louise Adler resigned as director. Adelaide had seen nothing like it and many were scratching their heads trying to understand what had happened. A new board has been set up and an apology given to Abdel-Fattah, with an invite to the 2027 festival.

So, were the 180 writers who pulled out of the festival in protest about Abdel-Fattah being dis-invited correct, or simply following the freedom flavour of the month? Writer Troy Bramston thinks they are wrong and quite hypocritical. He mentions that it was okay for the board to dismiss Tom Freidman, author and columnist for the New York Times in 2024. Writer Joshua Dabelstein also thinks so, and writes “Anti-Zionists such as Abdel-Fattah don’t criticise Israel. They call for it’s elimination. This is the difference between critique and bigotry.” Do the 180 writers who resigned in protest understand that? I think not.

Award-winning poet, author, and an old hand at Adelaide Writers Week, Peter Goldsworthy, writing in *Culture, The Australian* Week-end Jan 31/Feb 1, states that he is shocked by the hypocrisy and that Abdel-Fattah herself doesn’t believe in free speech: e.g. her own attempt to cancel Friedman. Considering that Abdel-Fattah supports “the end of Israel,” Goldsworthy says he would like her to have been at the Writer’s Week for him to question her on that and also her role in the infamous “doxxing” of 600 Jewish artists and writers in 2024, whose personal details were published on social media.

Goldsworthy puts the massive withdrawal from the festival down to the pressure of social media and reckons that “I also know that some of them, including several high-profile names, felt an overwhelming social media pressure to withdraw — and now regret it. Who could blame them? The lynch mobs of social media are implacable.” He hopes that Abdel-Fattah will be there in 2027.

Then there is Kate Llewellyn, who features in an article by Caroline Overington *The Australian* 22 January 2026. Llewellyn is the author of 25 books, many prize-winning, including numerous poems. Now aged 90, she bemoans the cancellation of ‘Australia’s oldest, most beloved cultural event.’ As a pioneer member of the Adelaide Writers Festival, Llewellyn thinks that Adler cannot be forgiven for what she has done.

“One friend said to me ‘If I’d known the truth (about the efforts of Abdel-Fattah to cancel Jewish writer Thomas Friedman before she herself was cancelled), I never would have joined in the boycott’. The hypocrisy, it’s shameful.”

“I want them all to know: what you have done is wicked, and to do it so idly, so casually, to something so precious . . . What else could I do but write a poem?” And she did, which ends us with “How quickly we turned on each other, with glaring looks, turned backs and sorrow. We left you to walk away, wearing the halo you had put on your head.”

And so the semi-arthritic righteous clowns walk away, turn their backs, indulge in arcane politics instead of splendid literature assessment — and bummer up a most wondrous festival, to leave it scattered on the dusty streets of Adelaide for magpies to pick at and ghosts of former speakers to mourn and cry ‘foul!’ While Barry Humphries, wherever he may be, would decry the cancellation with a salty tear or three, and perhaps write: “They’re a bit like a scallywag silverfish, you know. They ignore the words and eat up the paper, and one day it is all gone and they wonder why!” •

The Council to Homeless Persons

Established in 1972, the Council to Homeless Persons is the peak Victorian body representing individuals and organisations with a stake or interest in homelessness. Our mission is to work towards ending homelessness through leadership in policy, advocacy and sector development.

<http://www.chp.org.au/>

See our Consumer Participation Resource Kit at:

http://www.chp.org.au/public_library/cpkit/index.shtml



What has this man done?

On the rampage! President Donald Trump is removing everything that has even a slight whisper of middle road or left-wing politics including care of the environment. When he came back again as the 47th president on January 20, 2025, he immediately set out to remove whistle-blowers and truth sayers. In January and February alone, he signed a batch of executive orders designed to slash and burn.

On the same day of his inauguration he signed a number of executive actions, among which were:

1. Removing the United States from the World Health Organisation, thus cutting off funds for disease eradication programmes, vaccine distribution, and pandemic preparedness.

2. Rolls back, or eliminates, a \$2 co-payment on generic medications for Medicare and Medicaid recipients, thus stripping low-income Americans of the benefit.

3. Signed an executive order stripping birthright citizenship for children of non-citizens, which was a direct violation of the 14th Amendment.

4. Jan 22. Withdrew America from the Paris Climate Agreement.

5. As the year rolled on, Trump continued to slash and burn. January 25. Rolls back key patient protections, eliminating essential health benefits and allowing insurers to deny coverage based on pre-existing conditions. The order also defunded ACA outreach programmes that help Americans enrol in affordable health plans.

6. January 27: Trump issued an executive order halting almost all federal grants for public health, education, small business, which caused the U.S. economy to stall on infrastructure and medical projects.

7. January 28. Sent masses of emails to two million federal employees encouraging them to resign with warnings of job cuts and reduction in benefits.

8. January 31. Granted Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) access to sensitive data and payment systems, including those managed by the Treasury Department, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security.

9. February 1. Cuts small business grants, including black and women-owned businesses.

10. February 2. Cuts funding for federal clean energy and sustainability programmes.

11. February 3. Empowers Elon Musk's Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) to dismantle the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) a key institution in foreign aid, disaster relief, and global health initiatives, thus leaving many USAID workers stranded with no plans for their repatriation back to the United States.

12. February 4. Initiates sweeping rollbacks to environmental protections, weakening regulations on clean air and water quality.

13. February 5. Dismantles key student relief loan programmes.

14. February 5. Reduces funding for Pell grants and other student aid programmes.

15. February 7. Reduces funds that support grants awarded by the National Institutes of Health for indirect expenses.

16. February 7. Moves to dismantle the Department of Education.

17. February 13. The Office of Personnel Management and Acting Director Charles Ezell ordered federal agencies to terminate tens of thousands of probationary employees.

Anything that the Trump administration opposed has been deleted from various government websites. A crime prevention research organization — the Office of Justice Programs — forced to remove almost 1,000 pages, with the Department of Justice removing 180 pages, one of which showed that undocumented immigrants commit less crime than citizens. All across the United States, departments were ordered to remove documents that the Trump administration objected to. In September 2025 the National Institution of Justice was forced to remove pages that showed white supremacist and far-right violence were the more common forms of terrorism.*

The above is simply the tip of the iceberg. Trump has also ordered the partial shut down of Homeland Security, Treasury, Agriculture, Interior, Justice, Commerce, Transportation and parts of HUD, which is Housing and Development. Earlier in Trump's reign of slash and burn was the closing down of The Voice of America, a far-reaching radio broadcaster since when it beamed its free news into Europe attacking Nazi propaganda, and into Asia from 1942. After World War II VOA channeled itself into Radio Free Europe and Radio Free Asia.



Pix courtesy Denver Post



Trump's gutting of VOA resulted in 639 employees left without employment. But in January 2026 Congress opposed Trump's executive order and provided the funds to enable VOA to continue.

In some areas Congress has blocked Trump's executive orders and federal judges have also placed a ban on some of Trump's burn tactics. Trump has also taken to the nation's history with a gigantic pair of scissors, cutting historical information where it doesn't suit the new administration. The Smithsonian American Art Museum has been targeted by Trump's officials, being accused of bias in the recording of the slave trade and ordered to "erase evidence of injustice," to certain black people.

Not only does Trump wish to change the present to suit himself and his fellow billionaires, he now wants to change the recording of history to 'this didn't happen!' **George Orwell, where are you? •**

*Much of the above information is courtesy of Congressman Steve Cohen.

The Animal Rehoming Service

For further information, please log onto <http://www.tars.org.au/>
The Animal Rehoming Service Inc. is a registered charity.
Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. (ABN: 51 275 837 567)



Addison is a 6 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 19kg female Foxhound x Beagle, who's looking for a loving home.

She's a sweet natured, playful and active girl who loves cuddling up to her favourite people, as well as snoozing in a sunny spot in the garden.

She'd love to be a treasured member of the family. She'd suit an active family, happy to walk her daily. An all-adult home or one with older, dog-savvy children would be great.

Addison has happily lived with both cats and dogs. She was attacked by a dog a few years ago though, so is now weary of dogs who rush at her, but is otherwise comfortable with friendly dogs. She'd love a home with another friendly dog for company.

She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors.

Addison's adoption fee is \$650. Microchip Number: 95600007788798. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE10070.9 If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Geelong based, but we go to you).

~ ~ ~



Update: I'm still looking for a loving home!
Louie is a 6 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 29kg Labrador x Beagle who's looking for a loving home.

He's an affectionate, happy boy and who would love to be a treasured member of the family. He's also an active boy so would suit an active family, happy to walk /exercise him daily.

His favourite things are cuddling up to his favourite humans, getting tummy rubs, running along the beach and playing fetch.

Louie would be fine as an only pet if he had some human company during the day. Otherwise a home with another dog or cat would also suit. (He's happily lived with both).

He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Louie's adoption fee is \$450. Microchip Number: 956000011141358

Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Cheltenham based, but we go to you).

**New RSPCA Opshop in Elsternwick, Victoria.
Recently opened at 418 Glenhuntly Rd.,
Elsternwick**



Website:

<https://rspcavic.org/store/elsternwick-op-shop/>





The Conversation: Re-published with permission under Creative Commons

Neo-Nazis marching through Australian streets, black-clad and masked, have become a common sight in recent years. Over a century since the rise of fascism – Nazism is the German school of fascist ideology – perhaps we have forgotten or become complacent about what this actually means.

Review: Nazis in Australia: The Special Investigations Unit, 1987-1994 – compiled by Graham Blewitt & edited by Mark Aarons (Schwartz) Reviewed by Kristy Champion Senior Lecturer in Terrorism Studies, Charles Sturt University.

In the cold mud of Serniki, Ukraine, the bullet-riddled skeleton of a mother shelters her 12-year-old daughter even in death; the tattered remnants of a baby jacket are all that remain of her second child.

In Liepaja, Latvia, a young girl watches as her family is beaten with rifle butts and her father is loaded, bleeding, into the back of a truck, never to be seen again.

In Cemaluša, now in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a communist is tortured in a prison, hung upside down from a door and beaten.

A Latvian SS officer participates in the gassing of 30,000 Jews, partisans and other victims at mobile gassing installations near Minsk.

A Croatian Nazi officer leads a roving death squad near Sarajevo that holds peremptory “hearings” before torturing and executing countless civilians: men, women and children.

What these historical crimes have in common is one thing: the Nazi perpetrators fled to Australia after the war. As Mark Aarons and Graham Blewitt demonstrate in *Nazis in Australia: The Special Investigations Unit, 1987-1994*, such stories are the tip of a formidable iceberg.

Around 27,000 Australians gave their lives in the fight against fascism during the second world war. Many of those veterans who returned and who carried wounds, seen and unseen, all their lives, now lie in Australian graveyards, along with the very men they fought against.

Quest for justice

Nazis in Australia is a timely contribution to the public discourse. Its beginnings can be traced to the 1980s, when Aarons, a diligent journalist, started investigating Nazi collaborators and war criminals who had taken refuge in Australia.

Aarons turned his investigations into a Radio National series, which in turn sparked government action. The Menzies Review, undertaken in 1986, led to an initial sweep of some 70 cases of suspected Nazi war criminals in Australia.

In 1987, with the support of prime minister Bob Hawke, Bob Greenwood QC established the Special Investigations Unit to conduct investigations into suspected war criminals. It had around 80 staff, from all walks of life.

Nazis in Australia describes the vast efforts – and also the sadness – of those who worked in the Special Investigations Unit. Blewitt, the former director of the unit, has collected memories from his colleagues, gathering statements from lawyers, historians, researchers, archaeologists, translators, consultants and police investigators.



Journalist Mark Aarons began researching war criminals in the 1980s. Black Inc.



These contributors recall their engagement with the Special Investigations Unit and their determined quest to bring perpetrators to justice. The personalities of each of the volume's contributors – some quiet, some boisterous, all committed – rise up from the pages.

The book details the international pilgrimages in search of decades-old evidence. Investigators met with Ukrainian peasants, Croatian judges and top Kremlin officials. They heard testimonies in numerous languages, and interviewed victims' families, witnesses, co-offenders and alleged perpetrators. They examined original SS documentation in Germany. As one police investigator recalled:

What struck me was the brutal efficiency evident in the Nazis' creation of this documentation. Being surrounded by such calculated racial and soul-destroying history, you could virtually hear the SS jackboots stomping up and down the corridors.

Archaeologist Richard Wright tells us of excavating 553 bodies from the mass grave in Serniki, mostly women and children. His colleague Sonia lays flowers on the site. Translator Ludmila Stern recalls the long, strenuous days, and the “distressing nature of the subject matter”, interpreting traumatic recollections across numerous languages and cultures.

Historian Konrad Kwiet, writes of his disillusionment with the Australian legal system, his expert evidence on the stand being reduced to yes-no answers. Even now, many years later, Australian Federal Police officer John Jansen writes, “it is almost daily that I reflect on what witnesses had recounted detailing the horrors that the victims of the Holocaust went through”.

The investigators also had to disentangle webs of lies spun by war criminals, many of whom had assumed false identities and concocted fake alibis. Some had layers of protection that had to be peeled back, including one individual who was a known Nazi but was recruited as a paid ASIO agent.

Doing the right thing



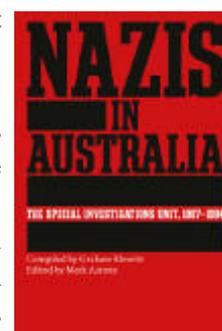
Neo-Nazis outside Parliament House in Melbourne, March 18, 2023. James Ross/AAP

The Special Investigations Unit did not fly blind. It met with and learned from similar teams in Germany, Israel, Canada and the United States, including the “Nazi hunters” in the Office of Special Investigations.

During its tenure, the unit examined 841 cases. Four were referred for prosecution, with three going to trial. In 27 cases, there was adequate substance to the allegations but insufficient evidence for referral to prosecutors.

Another 262 cases ended because the suspects were dead or likely to be dead, and 105 cases were suspended because the suspects were overseas, charged overseas, or the allegations proved false. In 191 cases, the claims could not be substantiated. In the remaining cases, the suspects were “not located in Australia”.

The work of the Special Investigations Unit was cut short. In 1994, prime minister Paul Keating “insisted on closing down the SIU”, before the most serious offender under investigation could be charged. *Nazis in Australia* details the withdrawal of support, confronting the allegations that the unit was a waste of resources and did not secure enough convictions.





Aarons and Blewitt establish that the Special Investigations Unit represented a line in the sand. It demonstrated a commitment to addressing the crimes of the past and sent a clear message to war criminals that they would not find safe haven in Australia.

“Australians should be proud that, for a brief period in our legal history, we stood up and did the right thing,” writes Blewitt.

Triumphs and failures

It seems almost a cliché to say this book is a useful contribution to the knowledge of our past and the troubling tolerance of war criminals in our midst. It has become something of an open secret that Nazis were permitted to migrate to Australia. They were seen as a better option than communists.

Blewitt and Aarons have given us an unflinching history, beautifully written and devastating to read. Their book documents the challenges of navigating an ever-changing political environment and the complicated bureaucratic and legal obstacles to justice. Its contributors confront the reader, not cautiously but honestly, with the content of their work and what it meant to them.

In detailing the Special Investigations Unit’s triumphs and failures, Nazis in Australia never loses sight of its true purpose. The team of professionals who sought to change Australia brought some dignity to the victims. They identified graves so the bodies could be exhumed with care, and attempted to bring the genocidal killers to justice.

In humanising the victims of unfathomable violence, the authors provide a rare insight into lived history, without the distance so common in more academic works.

Nazis in Australia is also a lamentable account of the normalisation and tolerance of war criminals and the destructive malevolence of Nazi ideology. Its shocking accounts of atrocities committed against unarmed men, women and children are an urgent reminder of the dangers of complacency and indifference. •



Kristy Campion: Senior Lecturer in Terrorism Studies, Charles Sturt University

Dr Campion (BA (Hons 1 Class) PhD (JCU) is Senior Lecturer in Terrorism and Security Studies. In 2025, she was ranked as the top Australian researcher in her field nationally by The Australian Research Magazine, based on scholarly impact and citations.

Dr Campion is the Research Lead for the Threats to Australian Domestic Security team, within the Contemporary Threats to Australian Security (CTAS) research group. The Domestic Security team engages in collaborative research on the contemporary extreme right wing threat, with ongoing projects on insider threats, anti-government extremism, and youth radicalisation.

Her research focuses on terrorism and extremism in western democratic contexts. Her research on right wing extremism has canvassed transnational and domestic networks, ideologies, the participation of women, online vectors, and more. Dr Campion's research on left wing extremism has examined both historical and contemporary strategies. Her research on religious terrorism has explored their presence and networks in Australia, tactical evolution, and targeting considerations. In 2022, she published Australia's first comprehensive history of terrorism, *Chasing Shadows: The untold and deadly story of terrorism in Australia*.

She is currently Senior Lecturer in Terrorism Studies for the Masters of Terrorism and Security Studies at Charles Sturt University.



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Our History

OzChild is one of the longest-serving charities for children, young people and families in Australia.

From the visionary actions of our forebears and our humble beginnings in the 1800s in Victoria, the OzChild family tree is one of many branches that have grown into the organisation we see today.

Staying true to one of our strategic goals of growing our reach, OzChild is now a national organisation, providing vital services to support and strengthen children, young people and families in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT.

The OzChild family tree will continue to grow and flourish as we strive to achieve our vision: that all children and young people are safe, respected, nurtured and able to reach their full potential.

Who We Are Today

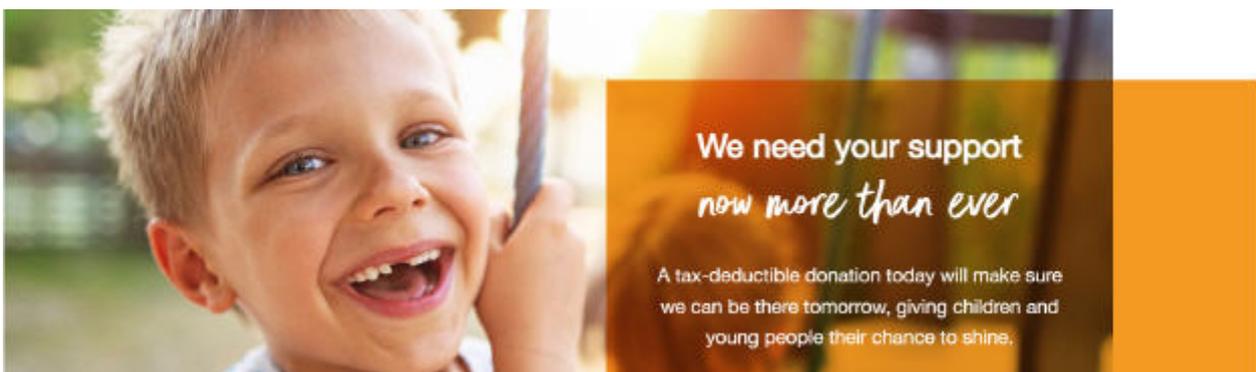
We work hard every day to provide a better future for those in our care, with the belief that every child and young person deserves the chance to shine.

We are focused on providing support for children and young people in foster and kinship care and keeping families together where possible. This is done through the delivery of evidence-based programs and services aimed at strengthening and repairing relationships.

OzChild was one of the first non-government organisations to introduce evidence-based programs to Australia. As such, we have a proven record of working collaboratively with the government to allocate investment in innovative solutions to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable children and young people.

Today OzChild employs over 700 staff, carers and volunteers in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the ACT, delivering 23 programs and services to over 10,000 children, young people and family members annually.

“It is no longer good enough for a child to only get what is available. We strive to give a child what is needed and what the evidence says works” – **Dr Lisa J. Griffiths**



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Foster Care Enquiries: 1800 954 550



The adventures and misadventures of Artificial Intelligence

AI, or Artificial Intelligence, has come into the life of the everyday Australian with a bang. Within a short period, AI has proven to be of exceptional use in medical, dental, and certain scientific fields.

But AI has a dark side, as with almost all of humankind's inventions that are made to promote human intelligence and health, it may be used for other purposes.

Much of Leonardo da Vinci's visionary projects have in time become a reality — flying machines, submarines etc. It seems that whatever the mind of the human being conceives then it will achieve, given time.

Science fiction eventually becomes fact. Back in the 1940s-50s the idea of a communicating wrist-watch depicted in Dick Tracy comic books was seen as simply fiction. The communication wrist-watch became a reality in the mid to late 1990's, and by 1997 IBM's Deep Blue computer defeated world chess champion Garry Kasparov, demonstrating the power of rule-based AI.

AI has become particularly useful in the field of medicine, enabling improved diagnostic accuracy, enabling remote diagnostics—particularly in injuries caused by sport. AI is improving MRI and CT scanning, producing better quality images, thus speeding up the time it takes for quality interpretation, which can lead to early detection of disease and better outcomes for patients. AI paves the way for a more personal approach to healing, particularly in cancer research.

Weather forecasts can be predicted with more accuracy using AI models, especially in following the paths of cyclones, while the use of AI algorithms can allow better checks on climate change.

But AI has a dark underbelly — which has been fast snatched by persons of immoral intent — hence cartoons and videos of otherwise innocent children and adults in sexually graphic images are easily available on the internet, regardless of how much censoring the AI firms engage in. It was fairly easy for Trump or one of his 'hirelings' to place the heads of Barack Obama and his wife Michelle onto the bodies of apes using a crude version of AI, but more sophisticated models can do almost anything the mind conceives.

Grok, Elon Musk's new AI chatbot, has been used to display a horde of sexually explicit images of women and children. These are deep fakes, according to Robert Booth of *The Guardian* — planted within the chatbot without permission, while Musk and his technical advisers do not appear to be in any particular hurry to have them removed. Booth estimates that Grok AI generated about three million sexualised images in less than two weeks, including 23,000 that appear to depict children.

“What we found was clear and disturbing: in that period Grok became an industrial-scale machine for the production of sexual abuse material,” said Imran Ahmed, UK Center for Countering Digital Hates chief executive. “Stripping a woman without their permission is sexual abuse.”

On the 12th of January 2026, the UK parliament posted the following: “That this House condemns the use



*The four horsemen of the Apocalypse
AI generated image by Sam C Tomasi*

of Grok AI to generate and disseminate sexually explicit and non-consensual images of women and children on X [Twitter], including digitally undressing and sexualising images of minors; notes with alarm that such material has included depictions of children as young as 10 and has circulated widely despite platform safeguards and stated policies; recognises that this conduct may constitute the creation and distribution of illegal sexual content, including child sexual abuse material; notes that Ofcom* has urgently contacted X and its developer AI regarding compliance with UK online safety duties and has not received adequate assurances; deplores the failure of X to effectively moderate or remove this



Is this a set-back for AI? A judge has ruled that this AI generated image cannot become copyright.



material.” *Ofcom is the UK's regulator for the communications services.

One of the most sickening examples of misuse of AI generative images has come to light. Users of X (ex-Twitter) are asking for the blacked-out faces of the recently released children's Epstein files to be removed. e.g. “Hey Grok, can you unblur the face of a girl who's with Epstein.” On February 10 2026, the website Bellingcat reported: “This is not the first time AI has been used to fabricate images related to Epstein file releases. Some images that were shared on X, which appeared to show Epstein alongside famous figures such as US President Donald Trump and New York City mayor Zohran Mamdani as a child with his mother, were reportedly AI-generated.” Well, the jury is still out on that.

Is there nothing that AI cannot do? AI reports back to *Cat's Eye Watch*: “AI struggles with tasks requiring true understanding, consciousness, and genuine empathy.” That is somewhat scary! The world is building AI chatbots like crazy that have no empathy or compassion, which has been implanted into the ‘brain’ of humanoid robots. An AI robot was recently asked if it would kill a human being — the answer came back in the affirmative if it was threatened. Yes, it would kill.

Another dark side of AI technology is that students are using it as a master plan for creating reports supposedly of their own making. The temptation to use chatbots for university studies, hoping to deceive tutors, is growing fast among Australia's teenagers. These shortcuts do nothing to wire creative growth in the developing brain. The better path is slow creative struggling so as to become cognitive savvy.

Children and teenagers who use AI instead of good old fashioned research, will as one behavioural strategist mentioned, have brains that have turned to mush. Without independent thinking, researching, the brain lapses into weakened neural pathways.

Waleed Aly, writing in *The Age* newspaper 8 August 2025, finds it's hard to stay calm in the face of the AI storm. He is concerned that we cannot foresee all the uses that AI may be put to in the future. He states that so far technology has been under our control; we've always understood how technology works and have used it to further our goals. But, he writes “AI is not something we build. It is something we train. That is, we give it the tools to direct itself . . . As if to illustrate this starkly, the companies developing AI are currently training it to code. That is, they are training AI to program itself. And as AI reaches the point of thinking faster and better than any human can, it follows that AI will quickly produce the fastest, most sophisticated computer programmers on the planet. At that point, it will no longer be a tool, it will be an agent . . . Once it achieves this, it can begin developing itself.”

Aly mentions Daniel Kokotajlo, a former employee of Open AI, which developed ChatGPT, and who left the company concerned about the risks it was unleashing. “One example Kokotajlo offers is that AI has begun lying. Not making an error or drawing on bad data. but giving answers that are untrue, and which it knows are untrue. No one knows why this is happening, and its owners are trying to stop it from happening.” The upshot of this is that we should not be surprised if it starts pursuing its own aims. Google's AI told a blatant lie back in 2025 when it named an innocent graphic designer as the murderer of three-year-old Cheryl Grimmer. At the time Professor Toby Walsh of the University of NSW said that AI was not trying to find “what's true, they're trying to say what's probable . . . They are not grounded in truth in any way at all”

During an interview with *The Australian* newspaper in November 2025, Daniel Kokotajlo said “If you go talk to the modern models like ChatGPT or Claude or whatever, they will often lie to people. There are many cases where they say something that they know is false, and they even sometimes strategise about how they can deceive the user. And this is not an intended behaviour. This is something that the companies have been trying to stop, but it happens.” Trust AI? Outside of thoroughly researched medical and scientific modes, think twice. AI has the ability to put ethics and principles at bay.

In addition, the running of AI chatbots requires huge costs and gigantic infrastructure. The Stargate AI centre in Texas requires a \$500 billion investment over four years. It is said that there would be enough electricity used on the project to power about 750,000 U.S. homes. Massive!



Stargate AI Centre, Abilene, Texas. Credit Open AI

Companies all over the world are scrambling to invest in AI. Among the leaders for 2025-2026 are Microsoft, Amazon, Tesla, Apple, Meta Platforms, Google, AMD, Oracle. Deloitte research considers that Australian companies are lagging behind the rest of the world, but perhaps there is method in this hesitancy. Perhaps ‘proceed with caution’ is the operative phrase here in the land of Oz — let the overseas companies that have gone in boots and all, drive through the tangled web of AI thus allowing the Australian companies to have the last laugh together with the bush jackass—the Kookaburra. •



Political Capers

It doesn't get much worse than this. The Andrews/Allan Victorian Labor government consistently turned a blind eye to union tactics during the Big Build projects. This is the verdict of an anti-corruption watchdog.

The Age newspaper enquiry reports on 12 February 2026: "The revelations come amid the release of a landmark report from corruption-busting lawyer Geoffrey Watson, SC, that concluded the Allan government's signature infrastructure projects have hosted drug trafficking, systemic corruption and bribery, bikie gangs and the shocking sexual exploitation of women, at an estimated cost to the taxpayers of \$15 billion."

\$15 billion, wasted through corruption! Gangland syndicates carried out fire-bombings, to which no charges have yet been laid. CFMEU union officials insisted that Big Build projects use sub-contractors that were union friendly even though these were more expensive. If the major contractors refused to accept this 'blackmail' the word came back 'We will shut this project down.' One union representative was earning \$200,000 and given a government-funded car. At one building site union members together with bikie gangs arrived and demanded more than \$600,000, otherwise . . . ! A union rep requested "over a dozen of his associates, including bikie gang members, friends and relatives, be given lucrative roles on a rail level crossing removal project." Otherwise, the project would be shut down.

Geoffrey Watson, SC, has concluded that the Victorian government knew about the Big Build infection by the CFMEU union working with organised crime figures and bikie gangs, and chose to look the other way. It began with ex-premier Daniel Andrews and is now at the doorstep of premier Jacinta Allan, who has suddenly become shy of addressing the facts of the enquiry. *The Age* journalists, who have been investigating these rorts and publishing multiple pages over the past few weeks, have as of Tuesday 13th February, supplied very good evidence of corruption which allows their editor to proclaim from the masthead "**Victorian Labor accepted donations from companies now accused of corruption.**" Victorian Labor collected thousands of dollars from firms that now face police action over suspected corrupt payments or that placed gangland, bikie or CFMEU identities on taxpayer funded projects."

Premier Jacinta Allen has so far refused to back an inquiry into how and why Labor apparently turned a blind eye on this massive corrupt wrongdoing under her watch and the previous premier Daniel Andrews' watch. Not only has Victorian Police become involved with charges laid against certain personnel, but Federal Police also, are probing the corruption of two Big Build construction owner companies. It's not Watergate, but it certainly is Laborgate.

When he changes the name of the Department of Defense to the Department of War, you know something diabolical is about to occur. And it did! President Trump invaded Venezuela with the pretence that he was arresting a drugs baron and dictator. This dynamic shift in pursuing a path of offence rather than defence is exposed within Trump's continued assertion that he will have Greenland by one way or another, and that his sights are now set on Cuba and Columbia, — Columbia because "They make cocaine" and Cuba because "It is ready to fall." Even Mexico is placed on the list, with Trump hinting that Mexico is not a too hard basket, while already having a trade war with that country. What his warrior actions are being considered on the rogue state of Iran is anyone's guess at the present time. We shall have to use Trump's own words on many occasion "Wait and see. We'll see what it brings."

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth now known as Secretary of War, said: "We're going to go on offence, not just on defence. Maximum lethality, not tepid legality. Violent effect, not politically correct . . . We're going to raise up warriors, not just defenders."

STOP PRESS on the latest news re. AI

Published in *The Age* Tuesday 17th February 2026 is a full page article in the Business Section as provided by *The Telegraph*, London, by author Eir Nolsoe.

Under the heading of **AI beast on the prowl for jobs** the warning is loud and clear. AI will cost jobs, and not just thousands but millions. Within the article is a personal story by Louise Tucker, who has poured twenty years of her life in the film industry. As a graphic designer she finesses the details on movie sets, the posters in the background on scenes, the packaging, everything that is copyrighted: "I worked my way up to become successful . . . then the work just disappeared." Until recently, the 36-year-old was pulling in more than 65,000 pounds sterling (\$125,000) per year. Then, last year her income dropped to \$50,000. A homeowner, while leasing a car, she now wonders how she is going to pay her mortgage. And all because of AI virtually stealing her job. She has a garage full of graphic design kits, which she is desperately trying to sell because it has all been superceded by AI.

Those who write code for computers will no longer be employed, because AI will do that and do it faster and more accurately. Daron Acemoglu, economics professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology warns that AI will "automate a lot of jobs, and it will make a lot of skills redundant as a result." The original article may be read at:

<https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-sunday-telegraph/20260215/282063398422630>





Spotlight on Iran

Previous articles in Cat's Eye Weekly 2020

Why Iran is a hologram of Hitler's Nazi party

In 2017, Saudi prince Mohammed bin Salman labeled the supreme leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, the nearest thing the Arab world had to Hitler. Is this true? After all, president Trump of the United States of America, has also been called a Hitler. The word is not to be bandied about lightly, for Adolf Hitler was the worst mass murderer the world has seen. But when a dictator can rustle up millions of subjects to rally for his cause, such as the spiritual leader of Iran has recently done in opposition to certain of his subjects who call for truth and freedom, and then excites his mass crowd much the same as Hitler did at his rallies, there is cause for much concern.



In a sense, Nazism was a religion, and a fervent one at that. Germany's people were caught up in untold excitement with the idea of a master race, that blue eyes and blonde hair identified them with the old Norse and Germanic gods and engendered a pureness of race. It was Nazi policy that only people with Aryan blood in them would be suitable for citizenship within the state. Germany under Hitler was not a democracy. Iran uses a similar method by allowing its theocratic control of Shiite Islam to justify the imprisoning of journalists and researchers, and condoning undemocratic journeys into other countries by its Revolutionary Guards — particularly into Iraq and

Syria. Iran has long supported al-Qaeda and given refuge to terrorists.

Hitler authorised the research of nuclear weapons, hoping his scientists would find the secret to a nuclear bomb before Germany was eventually crushed by the allied powers. If he had succeeded, the whole history of the world would have been vastly different. Iran has nuclear capacity and though sanctions have been applied, is still eager to be a nuclear armed country.

Hitler was expansionist as he moved his armed forces into Austria, the Sudentland, France, Belgium, Poland and other European countries. Iran is also expansionist. Amir Tehari, executive editor-in-chief of the daily *Kayham* 1972-79 and the writer of eleven books, states that to remain in place the Islamic Republic of Iran has, to the best of estimates, executed 15,000 people and forced more than eight million Iranians into exile.

Hitler had absolute control of the media. Iran is the same, imprisoning journalists who differ as to the regime's actions. The last issue of CEW revealed how foreign journalists and writers who entered Iran, were watched wherever they went, often assigned a 'guard' to ferry them around and make accommodation arrangements for them, and no doubt, to refer the movements and activities of the visitor to higher authorities.

Saudi's crown prince Mohammed bin Salman may have accused Iran in spite, for Saudi Arabia's human rights record is not unstained, but there is some truth in his statement. Iran has its spys in many Arab countries and is engaged in undercover military activities within some of these states. Iran has repeated numerous times that it will destroy Israel. Under Khamenei, Iran has a volunteer paramilitary force, the Basij, to carry out missions; the extraterritorial group Quds Force, and of course, the Revolutionary Guard Corps and another militias. Iran is well equipped to come down hard on dissenters to its autocratic rule and to carry out subversive missions into other Arabian countries. Hitler had his SA and SS groups for the purpose of security and surveillance. Iran, under Khamenei, the same.

Unlike Hitler, the Ayatollah is prepared to wait. But how long will the Western world — in particular the European Union — wait, while the pot is simmering so close to the edge? •

From: Cat's Eye Weekly 132, 20 Jan 2020.



From: Cat's eye Weekly 135, 18 September 2020.

When hope is all you have



Dr Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who may not look the same if and when she is returned to Australia.

She was in Iran to attend a conference arranged by the University of Religions and Denominations at Qom, a city south of Iran's capital, Tehran. You would think that would have been enough to establish her as a dedicated researcher. After all, you don't get these invitations unless you are well known to the organisers.

Dr. Kylie Moore-Gilbert, who had graduated from Melbourne University, was arrested by Iran's Revolutionary Guard in September 2018 on a charge of spying. Spying at what and spying for whom has never been established. However, Australia is seen by Iran as to be too close politically and militarily to America, and this factor may well have influenced Iran authorities in arresting Kylie Moore-Gilbert. Dr Moore-Gilbert was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in one of Iran's worst jails, Evin prison. Sources state that the conditions inside Evin prison are horrendous, which include strip searches every time a prisoner is moved, blindfolds used when being transferred from cell to cell and where screams of inmates may be heard continuously through the night. Dr Moore-Gilbert has no human

rights while in detention and the psychological trauma she is no doubt experiencing would be devastating. All she has is hope — hope that somehow the Australian government may find some way of having her released through diplomatic channels. The likelihood of that happening is minute because she has now been transferred to the hellhole prison at Qarchack, which is a desert complex well away from the capital, Tehran. Apparently, this move was carried out as a punishment, but punishment for what?

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh, a native speaker of both Arabic and Persian languages and a world renowned political scientist, recently reported on Iran's prisons. "Last week, wrestling champion Navid Afkari, was given a death sentence along with 74 lashes His two brothers were also arrested; Vahid Afkari was given a prison sentence of 54 years and 74 lashes, and Habib Afkari received 27 years and 74 lashes. Navid Afkari had smuggled out a letter, which read in part: 'For around 50 days I had to endure the most horrendous physical and psychological tortures . . . They would place a plastic bag on my head and torture me until I suffocated to the very brink of death. They also poured alcohol into my nose.' "

Dr Majid Rafizadeh went on: "The Iranian regime has significantly ratcheted up its human rights violations. The United Nations and the European Union, which preach about human rights, completely turn a blind eye to the regime's abuses. According to a recent report by Amnesty International released on September 2, various branches of Iran's government, including the judiciary system, law enforcement and the Ministry of Intelligence, are involved in these abuses and crimes.

"The report stated: 'Iran's police, intelligence and security forces, and prison officials have committed, with the complicity of judges and prosecutors, a catalogue of shocking human rights violations, including arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, against those detained.' "

Amnesty International also reports: 'The organization's research found that victims were frequently hooded or blindfolded; punched, kicked and flogged; beaten with sticks, rubber hose-pipes, knives, batons and cables; suspended or forced into holding painful stress positions for prolonged periods; deprived of sufficient food and potable water; placed in prolonged solitary confinement, sometimes for weeks or even months; and denied medical care for injuries sustained during the protests or as a result of torture.'





Dr Kylie Moore-Gilbert is the author of numerous articles on the Middle East — in particular the Arab Spring — and one article in particular, may have been used as an excuse by Iran to imprison her. She wrote about an uprising in a neighbouring country to Iran in 2011 to which Iranian officials may have taken offence, though this is uncertain. Other scholars consider there was no harm to Iran in her article. Diplomatic channels appear not to be working, in that she has been in prison for almost two years. All she clings to is hope — hope that one day soon she will be released from this grave injustice to her body, mind and soul. •

Footnote: After two years in the hell hole of Iran's prisons, Kylie was released and returned to Australia in November 2020 due to a prisoner swap with three Iranian terrorists who had been held in Thailand.

Warning: This story depicts actual happenings from World War II in Europe 1942-1945 and is of an extreme sensitive nature.

Love Never Dies

A serial story by Graham Price

Chapter 2

Budapest Hungary, Sunday 20th September 1942—October 1942:

Theodor Weisz stood at the grey headstone in the grounds of the Kozma Street Cemetery in Budapest and recited the Kaddish prayer. Two years now since his beloved had gone — Livia Zelda Weisz, the blessed mother of his three children; her name inscribed in Hebrew underneath the Menorah, the lamp of God—the seven candelabrum as detailed in the Book of Exodus.

He couldn't stop the tears that came, nor would he want to, for they were a symbol of his love—for the years they had had together. His memory was sharp and was focused on the day they met at the Owl and Bluebird Bookstore in Budapest. She was standing at the fiction shelves, holding a book with her delicate fingers. He could see her lips silently moving as she was reading. She nodded to herself, flipped a few pages over and began reading again. He saw a smile appear on her pink cheeks and she gave a small laugh which he barely heard. He was intrigued, captivated by the look of her — her dark brown hair flowed down her back ending in flowing curls; her tiny waist was pulled in by a tight-fitting blue and green floral dress that almost reached to her red shoes. She wore no hat or head covering and he moved closer to inspect this nymph who had taken his attention.

He pretended to be looking for a book, sliding up close to her and inspecting the shelves, with the index finger of his right hand tapping the spines. Sensing his presence, she turned, and he saw those shiny brown eyes looking at him with interest. He smiled, looked down at the book in her hands and pointed. "The Mill on the Floss . . . George Eliot I think, is that not so?"

She smiled and pressed her lips as if she was unsure about this intrusion into her reading. "Yes, that is correct. A translation from the English. Have you read it?"

He couldn't believe his luck — she could have turned away, told him to mind his own business, or even refused to answer him, but she was staring at him now, her eyes roaming over his face, noting his neat blue dress suit, clean white collar and bright red tie, then looking upward to his lustrous hair. She closed the book.

For a moment he was at a loss for speech — his thoughts were rushed, clamouring, swarming in his mind like a honey bee's nest. She had blown him away. She was Jewish . . . seems most probable, but young Jewish ladies in general didn't go around in shops and stores without a chaperone. The silence between them was too long. He plucked up his courage. "I know of the author through my literature class and her other book, Middlemarch, which I have read — strange isn't it, a woman taking a man's name!"

The girl seemed amused by his approach. "Not so strange when you consider that she was a beacon for feminine rights. I've seen you somewhere . . . what is your name?"

"Theodor Weisz, and yours?"

"Livia Kohn. My father is over there browsing in the history section."



If legs could turn to jelly Theodor thought his would, and very soon at that. Oh my goodness, he thought, the Rabbi, Elias Kohn! Has to be! But then he began to breathe more easily. So, not orthodox — her clothes had shown him that — a neolog progressive family much like his own. That's why they were here in this enlightened bookstore. He took some courage, breathed deeply and said: "Why is it that I haven't seen you here until now?"

She shrugged, fluttered her eyelashes at him and smiled again. "I've been in France staying with my uncle's family and furthering my education."

"So, not all cooking, washing, and ironing for you, eh? You are a feminist, much like George Eliot?"

"Yes, I intend to be a writer like she was, exploring the inequalities that exist in this world. I am not the first and I won't be the last, but we women have to speak up for ourselves . . . we have to take control of our lives."

"And forsake marriage, perhaps?"

"Yes, that also if it is destiny's plan."

"And if it is not?"

She shrugged. "If it is not, then I will gladly go where my God will lead me. Oh, here comes my father, let me introduce you."

Theodor wiped the tears from his face. He noted that there were several *Dianthus serotinus* flowers around the edging of the grave — that late pink carnation, a flower common enough in the cemeteries of Budapest, but the closeness of them to his beloved's grave indicated to him that this was a good sign, a good omen. He took the smooth pebbles out of his pocket and placed them onto the grey stone as tradition required of him. He must go, he was alive and there was much to be done.

Professor Weismann was inspecting the violin that Helena's father had crafted for her. His long, lean fingers turned it over several times with little um's and ah's coming from his vocal chords. He picked up his reading glasses and peered down the f-holes, plucked at the strings, tightened the pegs and finally made sure the bridge was firm and secure. He fitted it to his shoulder. "This is reasonable. Hand me the bow, my little Scheherazade."

Helena was nervous. The professor was renowned throughout Budapest for his critical assessment of musical instruments. She couldn't help but notice the Guarneri standing in the corner within a secured glass cabinet. She knew her father's craftsmanship was strong, but in the light of a Guarneri or a Stradivari, how could it possibly compete? The professor began tuning the strings, tightening the pegs then the fine tuners one by one. He finally settled, beginning the scales with the bow. Helena was biting her fingernails.

"And now my little Scheherazade, your choice; pick a difficult piece and we shall see what this instrument is made of."

"For testing, my papa likes Brahms' Hungarian Dance No.6 in D major."

"Yes, well chosen, that will be a rigorous test."

Helena leant back in the chair as the professor began to play. She thought it was a wonderful performance as Samuel Weismann was transfigured before her, taking control of the violin and moving his fingers with renowned precision and all by memory. Helena was enchanted. Her teacher was transformed into a young person and she imagined that he was Benjamin Sabot standing there before her. Suddenly he stopped and she came out of her reverie. She clapped.

"It will do," said the professor, "Yes, it will do, for now at least."

"Thank you."

The professor nodded. "It's adequate." He nodded again. "Adequate."

When he came into the kitchen for a much needed lunch, his wife Leah, turned to him. "Samuel, why do you keep calling Helena your little Scheherazade? She doesn't tell stories."

The professor grinned and placed his hands on her shoulders. "Oh, but she will . . . in years to come she will have many, many stories to tell, not only to her grandchildren, but to the entire world."

Benjamin Sabot was waiting for Helena, pacing the street outside the Forté Academy. The day was warming slightly with a bright blue cloudless sky. "So glad you've finished on time," he said, "And how was the professor today? Not too strict I hope?"

Helena laughed. "Oh, he's always strict, Ben. I imagine that's why he gets good results from us, his students. He wants improvement after each lesson, so if you turn up without practicing at home he can easily discern that."



Benjamin pulled two tickets from his trouser pocket. “As we discussed, I have tickets for the Atrium. Kadet Szerelem with your favourite actress Valéria Hidvéghy as the leading lady.”

Helena danced a little on the spot, leaned forward and kissed Benjamin on the cheek. “Oh, that’s wonderful! Cadet Love, and she’s so clever and beautiful. As long as you can get me home by four, otherwise I’ll be in trouble.”

“Plenty of time,” reassured Benjamin, taking her arm and heading for Margit Boulevard.

They paused before the seven-storeyed building housing the cinema on the ground floor, opened in 1935 not without some consternation with fitting the ventilation system, which by law was supposed to have a Hungarian firm supplying. The German firm AEG managed to slide around this ruling by commissioning a Hungarian firm to do the work. It wasn’t long before the secret was broken to the newspapers, but the Hungarian public were not interested, as long as good films were shown, so what?

Helena pulled at Benjamin’s hand. “Oh, look what’s coming for December — Beautiful Star — just in time for the Christmas holidays I guess, and with Gero Mály too! I remember him from Left-Handed Angel. Very handsome.”

“He should shave more.”

“Why?”

“Ah, that moustache doesn’t suit him. He’d be better off without it.”

“Why don’t you grow one, all the girls would fall for you then. Moustache’s are the in thing these days.”

Benjamin laughed. “I feel some sort of fluff there, but at thirteen my papa says it will take time.”

“You could look like that Hollywood movie star . . . oh, what’s his name, you know the very handsome one with the thin moustache.”

“Errol Flynn?”

“Yes, that’s the one. You do look a lot like him, you know.”

Benjamin tightened his grip on her hand. “Oh no, I have to be myself, not a replica of someone else. Anyway, we’d better go in, the film will be starting soon.”

Sándor Weisz stamped the papers and shuffled his feet under the plain military desk. He yawned. It was tedious work and no sooner had he reduced the pile in front of him than the assistant to his captain had brought him more. He pushed the new pile further away and re-read the letter from his parents, Leopold and Anna Weisz. So, his mother was pregnant again — after all these years. What a miracle that was! He remembered his father saying to him almost thirteen years ago that he might be having a sister. His parents felt very strongly that it would be a girl, and sure enough, out popped Helena.

That had been a long time coming after his own birth in 1925, which was barely a year after his parents were married. The military turned a blind eye when he joined up at seventeen, or rather was practically dragooned into the army even though the call-up age was set at nineteen. He’d been on the eastern front fighting against Russia when a grenade had splintered into his left leg, leaving him unfit for being at the front. Now he was stuck in this desk job going nowhere. Well, it was time for a break from that little room almost hidden away at the rear of the baroque Batthyány Palace. He moved down the stairs from the top floor and exited into Parade Square. His leg gave him some trouble as he negotiated the winding stairs, but he thought that was the price he had to pay for being away from the front. Even so, he was pleased with his recovery. He’d thrown the walking stick away, but it didn’t pay to look spritely, otherwise he’d be back at the front. It suited him to have a slight limp, even if it was exaggerated at times.

The Danube opposite, was calm. He breathed deeply, sucking in the slight warmth of the autumn air as he mingled with the lunch time crowd. It would be a pleasant walk down to the Chain bridge. So, why not? But he’d only gone about five-hundred yards when the leg began to ache, so he sat down on one of the benches looking toward the parliament building with its gothic revival towers. Sándor was of medium height, slim, dark brown hair with a slight reddish tinge to it, which was something he pondered upon now and then. His eyes were a vibrant blue and he pondered upon that also because no one else in the immediate family had blue eyes.

He must have fallen asleep because he felt a hand roughly shaking his shoulder. “The Captain’s been looking for you!” He turned to see his sergeant standing behind the bench.

“Oh, right. I’ll be there shortly.”

“Now!” said the sergeant. “Right now!”

“Alright, alright. No need to make a fuss.”

“You’d better move it, Private, otherwise . . . well, you know what he’s like when he’s in one of his moods.”

Sándor stood. “I’m coming, mustn’t keep the good Captain waiting, eh? I’ll just collect a few things from my office.”

The sergeant wheeled away. “Please yourself, but don’t go mucking about. Just be there.”



He was out of breath when he reached the top floor, pausing for a moment before he made his way along the passage to his small office. That's strange, he thought, where are all those files? The desk was completely bare. He pulled open the filing cabinet where he had left his lunch . . . nothing! The cabinet was empty, even his lunch package was gone.

He slammed the drawer shut. Who has been in here messing about? And what did the captain want that seemed so urgent? He edged back into the passage. Perhaps they're giving me some well-earned leave? It would be great to go home and see the family again. Yes, that's what it is, probably a week's leave. But what then, back to his regiment?

Regent Miklós Horthy turned away from the plush red velvet drapes that adorned each side of the window of Budapest Castle Palace. The view was captivating. The river Danube was sparkling as it passed under the Chain Bridge and the sky was a deep blue with the sun reflecting off the dome of St Peter's Basilica. He took a deep breath, as if encapsulating that magnificent scene almost totally within himself. But he could not remain there, not this morning, nor this afternoon and neither this evening when the lights of Budapest before the war had turned the city into a fairyland, but now were as black as a coal mine at night. All one could see was the moon now and then reflected in the dank waters of the Danube: an aid to any Allied bombers coming this way. He shivered. How long could this last?

He was Admiral of the fleet, head of the armed forces, and had been named Regent in 1920 by parliament after that authority had restored the monarchy. Horthy's appointment was made in order to thwart the efforts of King Charles IV in regaining his throne. In earlier days, Horthy had little to do with the country's affairs, but that had changed with the rise of the fascist government in Germany. Horthy's sympathies were mixed: he had little time for that usurper of Germany, Adolph Hitler, but recognised the other evil not all that far from Hungary's borders—Russia, under the thumb of what he considered was the crude and half mad Bolshevik, Josef Stalin.

He moved behind his elaborately carved mahogany desk and picked up the candlestick telephone. Should have these replaced by the more modern ones, he thought as he dialled the PBX in the basement, not all that long converted into a war room. The sharp metallic voice of Lieutenant Kovács answered. "Your Excellency!"

"Lieutenant, get me General Markus. And would you remind my son Miklós, the Deputy Regent, not to be late for dinner. We have the Swedish envoy coming. I'm relying on you, Lieutenant, to impress upon the Deputy Regent the importance of this visit."

"It will be done as you request, Excellency," said the Lieutenant. "Connecting you to the General now, sir."

The ringing tone was short. "Markus!"

"Ha, there you are Rudolph! We must have you and your good wife over for dinner again some time soon. And how is the family? The last I heard was that Roza was pregnant again."

"Ah, Miklós, so good to hear your cheery voice again. Yes, it was a boy born two weeks ago, solid little beast; there were some problems getting him out and Roza was bed-ridden for five days afterward. But she's fine now. We haven't named the little battleship he seems to be, yet, but were thinking we might name him after your courageous son, Deputy Regent István, whom you lost on the Eastern front recently. So sad that."

"We would be honoured if you were to do so. Shall we be godparents to the little battleship?"

"That goes without saying, Regent Horthy. Next Sunday at the Basilica? I can arrange it with Cardinal Serédi at short notice. He owes me a few favours."

"St. Stephen's? Yes, no problem there. We would be most happy to attend."

"Good, that's settled. Now, what is it you require of me?"

"It's about those Arrow Cross mongrels, fascists all of them. Getting too big for their boots and poking their noses where they shouldn't be. They're getting all this Nationalist Socialist rubbish from Germany and I don't like where this is going. I had the party banned at the beginning of the war, but it seems to be growing in strength again under the leadership of Ferenc Szálasi. It's unstoppable."

"Yes, I know the man. We keep a watchful eye on him. All the same, I can't do much about them, what with so many members in the military, the unions and so on, and we have prisons full of them who will be released soon when their sentences are up. It's a tricky situation Miklós. Many of my own people in the police ranks are sympathetic."

"I'm not without certain powers, Rudolf, but it's beginning to be rather difficult to put them in their place when so much of the country seems to be behind Arrow-Cross. My fear is that they may infiltrate their way into becoming the government in years to come."

"Well, I don't have the numbers to police their activities, but if you have specific information as to where and when, I can have my special gendarmerie group investigate, but remember Regent, the courts may not see it your way. Things change."



“Yes, Rudolph, I am well aware of that. There are so many forces at work in the world at present, that almost no one can visualise what the future will be. Take your Roza, for instance. She renounced her Jewish faith to marry you. She had seen the changing of the times, probably more so than either of us.”

“Yes, she is comfortable with that, though when the family is visiting, things do become strained. I don’t think her parents understand. It’s what we have to live with, my friend.”

Captain György Janos closed the door to his office and pointed to one of the plain wooden chairs in front of the desk. Sándor pulled the left side chair out and sat down. The captain slapped a slim file onto the desk, opened it, and resumed his seat behind the desk. “Cigarette, Private?”

“No thanks, sir. I don’t smoke.”

The captain smiled. “Well, I’d take it if I were you, because it will be the last one you will see for quite some time.”

A chill ran down Sándor’s back. What was this?

“Sir, I don’t understand.”

“Well, I’m sure you will in a moment or two. You are a Jew!”

“Yes, but what has that to do with offering me a cigarette?”

“You’re not supposed to be here.”

“What do you mean sir . . . here? In these barracks? No sir . . . my wound . . .”

Janos tapped the file with his index finger. “You have broken the law, Weiss, if that is your name. Is it?”

“Of course, sir, what else would it be? And what law am I supposed to have broken?”

“That which states that no Jew can now be employed in the armed forces. I see how you managed to sneak into the army; your papers are stamped Weiss, in error, but your signature—scrawly as it is—seems to be Weisz. It’s been overlooked by some sloppy official. You’re a clever little bastard Weisz or Weiss, whichever you are. You went along with this, knowing that it might not be picked up.”

Sándor felt the blood draining from his face. This can’t be true . . . what will happen to me?”

“Well, you can’t stay here. I am obliged to make further arrangements.”

“But . . . I’ve served with my regiment on the front lines, got wounded for my trouble . . . I’m happy to serve my country in whatever task you may assign me to. Very happy, sir.”

The captain shook his head slowly. He pressed a button on his desk and Sergeant Boda appeared. He snapped to attention. “Sir!”

“Sergeant, take this man to the cells. Tomorrow he will be transferred to the Ukraine battalions.

Sándor stood. “You can’t do this! I am a good soldier! I know what those battalions are, I’ve seen them with my own eyes. They’re unarmed slave labor where many do not survive the beatings, the cruelty!”

“You do exaggerate, soldier, and your documentation shows that you are unreliable. Not only is it sloppy, it is probably a forgery. You will go where the Kingdom of Hungary wishes you to be. Take him away, Sergeant.”

Sergeant Boda appeared flustered, perspiration was breaking out on his forehead.

“Permission to speak, sir!”

“Yes, what is it, Boda, and don’t try my patience. This interview with Weiss or Weisz, whoever he may be, is concluded.”

“Begging your pardon sir, I was a lawyer before the army conscripted me, and I am aware that there are moves within our military to allow wounded Jew soldiers to be exempted from the labor battalions. While it has yet to be promulgated, I understand that General Veress is very sympathetic to this being made law. With all due respect, Captain, your elevation to Major may be jeopardized if it was discovered that you personally sent a wounded soldier off to one of those battalions, whether it becomes law or not. Besides, the General may make dispensations at his leisure, don’t you think? After all, sir, what harm can there be for Weiss or Weisz to be left here doing office work, well out of the way . . . almost invisible if you understand my meaning.”

“You’re another clever bastard, Boda, are you not? I should have you sent off to one of those labor battalions where your lawyer’s degree would be of no use to you, but where your legal rants might be accepted by that scurvy mob out there in the Ukraine. Just a minute!”

He picked up the black telephone receiver and connected with the PBX. “Get me Colonel Varga at Buda Castle command.”



The male voice came back along the line: “Colonel Varga is occupied at the present moment. Do you wish him to call you back?”

“Ah, well, at his convenience then. Thank you.”

He replaced the receiver to its handle, where it slipped to one side and he had to grab hold of it with both hands, then placed it firmly down. I’ve got him rattled, thought Sergeant Boda. He doesn’t like this, being the meat caught in the sandwich, not quite in control.

The captain sighed and leant back in his chair. “We could be here for hours while Varga gets back to us, not known for snapping to attention for poor minor captains, aye, wouldn’t you agree, Boda?”

“Yes sir, indeed, very much so, sir.”

Captain Janos smiled, though to both Boda and the young private, it seemed forced. “Well now, since we may have to wait for some time, lets have a game of cards. Come, sit down Boda, there’s a free chair here next to W . . . ah, this very astute young private.”

December 1942: ReichFührer Heinrich Himmler’s SS and Gestapo headquarters Berlin.

The SS ReichFührer closed the drawer of his oak desk slowly, not wishing to damage it further. There was a small chip on the top of the drawer, which could only have happened when the cleaners were in his office the night previous. And he did notice when he had arrived, that the portrait of himself alongside that of the Führer was a little crooked. I’ll have their guts, he thought. Here am I awaiting a visit from SS-Obersturmbannführer Adolf Eichman, and I have to deal with messy bits and pieces in front of me. I’ll have them shot! Ah well, that’s a bit drastic just for cleaners, I imagine, unless by some quirk of fate they happen to be Jews sneaking in here to spy. He laughed. Heh heh, Jews in this building? They would drop dead on the spot and that would save us a lot of trouble.

He stood up and paced toward the window, looking out onto Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse 8. It was snowing, light flakes caressing the heavy window panes, a delicate fairyland he thought. Christmas this year would be a wonderful one. It wouldn’t do to have his *Geheime Staatspolizeiamt* headquarters decked out in Christmas lights and decorations, no, certainly not, and the German *bier* would not flow generously if he had his way, while at home his young daughter Gudrun and his adopted son Gerhard, would be bedazzled by all the decorations and gifts that his wife had insisted on, and as long as he could tear Margarete away from her nursing and homeopathy ventures, they could have a short happy time far from concerns of the war. And there was his lover and previous secretary, Hegwid and his baby son by her, to placate. How to fit her in over the Christmas period?

His thoughts were interrupted by his secretary, Gerda Schmidt, knocking on the door. “Obersturmbannführer Eichmann for you, mein Reichsführer.”

“Thank you, Gerda,” he said, peering closely at the top unbuttoned fastener on her blouse. He felt the warmth rise in his trousers when he looked at her, but she gave no indication of any feelings for him. Early days, he thought, I’m a patient man. I can wait.

“Ah, Obersturmbannführer, a great pleasure to see you again. Take the gentleman’s coat will you Gerda!”

Eichmann removed his overcoat and handed it to Gerda. “Yes, you manage to keep it rather warm and comfortable here.”

Himmler grinned. “It’s much colder down in the basement, Obersturmbannführer. It must be time for you to inspect again, seeing how pleased you were with everything down there last time you were here.”

Eichmann sat in one of the luxurious arm chairs facing the desk while Himmler resumed his seat. “We have added extra facilities for persuading the Jews and others what we wish them to tell us about their nefarious activities. The new cells that can be completely blacked-out have proven effective in loosening tongues, apart from other well known means. Ten days in one of those and they don’t know who they are anymore.” He laughed. “We could put our friend Göring in there and he would come out thinking he was captain of one of our U-boats instead of being in one of his Junkers.”

“How is he? I haven’t seen him for a while — not at the meeting we had with our Führer the other day.”

“Oh he’s fine, putting on too much weight though. The Führer patted his stomach when he walked past him the other week. Anyway, down to business. How are the deportations going?”

Eichmann fingered his chin. “Quite well, the transportations from Warsaw in Poland have been effective, though not without trouble. The more Jews we get out of there the less problems we face in the future, but there are just so many of them . . . somewhat difficult. We’ve managed some heavy transfers to Treblinka, and then of course as you know, its ashes to ashes. But yes, things are hotting up, we . . .”

Himmler butted in: “Hotting up, hotting up! You *do* put it rather succinctly, Obersturmbannführer.”

They both laughed. “Oh, but forgive me, Obersturmbannführer, would you like tea or something a little stronger?”

“Well, it’s rather early for me, Reichsführer, but if you could twist my arm a little, I may find it difficult to resist.”

Himmler went to the glass cabinet behind his desk and poured two shots of King George IV malt whiskey, one finger for himself and two for Eichmann. Here’s to good old King George, long dead I’m afraid, but this I have to say is England’s or Scotland’s, or even the world’s, finest malt.” Returning to his desk he said: “I rarely touch this stuff, but now and then I have an exception. I don’t encourage the staff either. It’s not a good look, never was, never is. Margarete often says to me that the liquor cabinet is bare, but I don’t really care all that much. Whatever is there is only for guests. Anyway, when we conquer the British, I’ll send a crate of the good King George’s superb malt back to you.”

Eichmann nodded. “Very wise Reichsführer.”

“You know, Obersturmbannführer, that the new facilities at Auschwitz-Birkenau are virtually finished, so that you can divert most of those Polish Jews there any time soon. You did appreciate the sign I added to the front gates — Arbeit macht frei — Work Makes You Free! Very clever that, if I may say so.”

“Well done, Reichsführer, well done. It’s always a pleasure to know that you don’t miss much. Apart from Herr Albert Speer, you would have to be the Reich’s most clever planner. I am totally impressed with the work you have done there, especially the new buildings at the rear of Birkenau — those farm houses that you have modified, who would know what they were designed to do? At my inspection the other month, my adjutant was full of praises for the work you have done. Most impressive . . . most impressive indeed. Now, if you could turn your attention to Chelno camp, we need further extensions. It’s becoming rather overcrowded. I’ve recently added a large number of Romani pigs there and the gas vans simply cannot keep up with the work. If you could see your way clear to . . .”

“I’ll make it a priority, Obersturmbannführer. ”

For the next two hours the men talked over strategies for reducing the population of Jewish persons from throughout the Greater German Reich, when the subject of Hungary came up. Eichmann stared directly at Himmler, rubbed his chin again and said: “You know, sooner or later I’m going to have to do something about that Regent Horthy. He’s not co-operating and the Jews are fleeing into that country from all over, where they think they will be safe. I’ve got news for him. It can wait for a little while, I’ve too much on my plate at present, but eventually I’ll have him and his government eating out of my hand, and I would want you and your SS people to be involved in that. How much warning would you need for your men to be on the move? I will have several regiments of Wehrmacht at my disposal, but I need many of your leading men under SS-Obergruppenführer Winkelmann to be in charge.”

“No problem. When you’re ready, just pick up the telephone and I’ll give you all you want in less than 48 hours. At your service mein Obersturmbannführer. By the way, we’re picking up quite a few catholic priests and protestant ministers who oppose us. I’ve had a number in the cells below and some of them are really tough bastards to crack. I don’t care for their religion, never have. It’s all mumbo-jumbo mystical stuff that has no place in this great Third Reich, and I know our leader thinks the same way. It’s not only the Jews we need to remove, it’s all these cross-worshipping imbeciles who are weakening the Reich with their ideas of forgiveness.” He shook his finger at Eichmann. “You know, the Jews do have one thing in common with us, strange as it seems — they don’t believe that this Jesus Christ is the son of God.”

Eichmann nodded, stretched, and stood up. “Just another Jew. Now, let’s inspect these new cells of yours.”

Budapest Hungary, Sunday 17th January 1943

Miklós Weisz took the earphones off and pushed the radio-set back into its secret hiding compartment. Leo had done well, he thought, building such a clever hiding place in the upper bedroom behind a set of bookshelves. It didn’t matter if anyone from the police or those Arrow-Cross fascists pulled the shelves across, all they would see would be a wallpaper covered wall behind with hinges and opening key well hidden within the maze of tiny pictures. His brother’s gentle hands that brought so much relief to his patients had wrought remarkable efforts. Miklós pondered how these talents were shared out when children were born; who decided what gifts were given to one child and not to another? Why was Leo given so much, when he himself was given much less? Woah, he thought, don’t go there. I have my art, which is so special to me, and I can sculpt. I wonder if I should do a bust of Herr Hitler, so that Anna may place it in the front garden near the letter-box? Might help to keep the devil incarnate away from our door?

But no, what about Leo’s patients? Most of them would be repelled by the sight of the devil blatantly staring at them as they entered the gate. Perhaps one of the Regent Horthy would be the better solution. Anyway, I must get this news to my sister-in-law in the kitchen.

“You look tired, Miklós, been up all night listening to the short wave?” said Anna as she was sauteing sliced onions with oleo. ”Could you hand me the white wine, I’m almost already ready for it.”

He picked up the uncorked bottle and sniffed at it. “Is this kosher? Doesn’t smell like it.”



“Oh, you’re losing your sense of smell, Miklois, no doubt caused by all that perfumery your female subjects wear trying to impress you.”

“Oh no, not Madame Petrovic, I think she scrubs up with that coal tar soap that the British are so fond of, so antiseptic!”

“A little advice Miklós. Don’t get too close to that family; if things become more tight around here with this present government making restrictions and if Arrow-Cross becomes the dominant political party . . . well, I’m just saying . . . don’t expect those gentiles to come to your aid when it all falls apart.”

“Hmmm, I was only thinking about the Arrow-Cross this morning . . . why on earth do people like them?”

Anna was stirring the wine into the bowl. “When things go wrong — in particular, Miklós — like when the Arrow-Cross people took over in 1939, and . . . if it wasn’t for Regent Horthy, people such as us probably wouldn’t be living here with a certain amount of freedom compared to other countries. But I do fear more than ever, that they are becoming stronger every day. The Regent had them banned, but I’m afraid they will be too strong for him in coming days. One man against the mob!”

”I was thinking, how about a sculpture of Regent Horthy’s head? I could whip one up in a couple of days. You could pop it into the garden near the fence and he would smile on everyone who comes to Leo’s surgery!”

She laughed. “Oh, not so fast, Miklós, I’m not having anything political planted in my garden.”

“Well, dear Anna, he’s not really political. He’s the Regent and as such has to keep himself above politics, or some such.”

Anna whisked the bowl. “Even the Regent won’t be able to keep himself neutral. It’s going very much warped here in this country. We might well be the last bastion of Jewishness in Europe, but if we have any common sense, Miklós, we would all get out before the storm comes.”

“Well, there is a storm approaching that may well save us. I’ve heard it on the radio.”

“Oh?”

“Yes, the Soviets have advanced, wiping out our second army at the River Don. The Germans have suffered too. But you know, one way or another it wouldn’t surprise me if the communists get all the way to Budapest.”

Anna stopped whisking. She stared at Miklós and what he saw in her eyes wasn’t pity at his innocence, but something else that he couldn’t quite fathom. It was as if a tiny ember of a flame had kindled anew.

“And you know what that will mean, don’t you? We’ll be trading one evil for another. It will simply be exchanging one repressive regime with the other side of the coin, dear Miklós. The coin may well be two-sided but both sides are versions of a similar rolling, putrefying darkness. It’s a machine you cannot stop my dear brother-in-law, a machine that does not care, that only wishes to spread itself over the earth until finally what you thought was light, is light no more. I fear that, and so should you. I’m talking to Leo tonight about all of us getting out. There are ways and means, England, the Americas. A new life, Miklós, away from these restrictive laws that they are passing almost day after day, with or without the Regent’s approval. I know some people who will help; you remember the Szenes family?”

“Oh yes, but if they ever came to the Shule, it would have been a miracle! There was Hannah, a little older than me. Didn’t she go off to Israel? I seem to remember that her father was the writer who died when she was a child. Is her mother still around?”

“Yes, and I know where she is, but I’ll keep that to myself for the moment. There are connections, Miklós, that must remain secret for a time. And keep your mouth shut — you will not speak of this to anyone!”

He didn’t know what to say, except to compliment her on her cooking and enquire of the other members of the household.

“Oh, Lena has gone into town . . . lessons with Professor Weismann and then she’s meeting that young tailor’s son, Benjamin Sabot. I rather like him, Miklós, though they’re far too young for anything permanent. Even so, I wouldn’t say no to him, if in future years they are still together. A politer young man you have yet to meet. Leo’s in his cabin out back.”

Helena Weisz had trouble opening the door to Professor Weismann’s Forté Academy, kicking away some of the snow that had iced up. The temperature was well below zero, but music lessons had to go on, otherwise she would not reach the zenith that was required of her. For some months now she had become aware of what existed within her fingers — it was as if there was some kind of magic hidden away there. She had overheard the professor talking to his wife the other week, saying something like ‘maestro’, but surely that didn’t apply to her? He must have been talking about one of his other students, but what if . . .? The door opened to reveal the professor’s wife, Leah. “Oh, Samuel’s little Scheherazade! Come in out of the bitter cold, dear girl. I think my husband has something special for you today!”



Her heart fluttered. The Guarneri, could it be? At long last she would get to play that exotic instrument. The warmth of the the studio embraced her as she eagerly entered. The professor was standing by the fireplace, placing a pair of tongs into its holder. He turned, greeting her with a smile. The Guarneri, she thought, it has to be!

“Good,” he said. “You have your father’s instrument there! You have practiced the work I set for you last week?”

“Yes, professor. My mama makes sure of that.” She looked around, spotting the Guarneri in its glass cabinet. Her enthusiasm fell . . . so, perhaps not? Not today! Getting ahead of myself, she thought, how could I have been so silly?

Samuel Weismann sat at the piano. “Take your place,” he said, pointing to the music stand in the centre of the room. She took the violin out of it’s case, peering at the sheet music on the stand. Oh no, she thought, surely not! Vittorio Monti’s, Czardas! That was way ahead of her talent. Her fingers trembled as she tightened the pegs and plucked at the strings, sensing their tension. Surely not!

“Professor . . . !” She paused, “I don’t think . . .”

He turned to look at her. “Yes, I know what you are thinking my little Scheherazade, but I have all confidence in you. I will lead you gently into it, but you will take the lead as a great violinist must do. You will conquer this majestic composition . . . you will soar to the heights upon which to fly . . . fly away beyond the stars. It will be so. Let us commence!”

“I can’t believe what I just did,” said Helena, giving Benjamin a light peck on his cheek. “I did it, I really did it!”

He laughed. “Hold on a minute, what did you do?”

“Oh Ben, I conquered Monti’s Czardas! Oh my! I can’t believe it . . . It must have been a dream, didn’t happen!”

“By the look on your face I’d say it *did* happen! I don’t know who or what this Monti is, but I’ve never seen you so alive, so excited. It must mean something deep and satisfying to you, Lena. You’re absolutely glowing!”

“Oh Ben, there’s nothing like it . . . to have conquered Czardas is to conquer the earth. The only way forward now is up . . . a stairway to the heavens.”

“Hmmm, very lyrical, Lena. Then let’s celebrate . . . let’s go and have a chocolate at Lapierre’s. Papa has increased my pocket money, so we can have a good time.”

“Oh yes please. I hope they have that special marzipan I like.”

He took the violin case and they linked arms. “I’m sure they do. Let’s go.”

They were walking along Vaci Street, watching light snow flakes settle on the Danube, kicking the snow with their boots, when Benjamin suddenly pushed Helena into the entrance of a jewellery shop.

“What are you doing? Ben! Ben!”

“Quick, get inside. Arrow-Cross gangsters coming our way.”

He opened the door and pushed Helena inside. The Jewish manager behind the counter took his eye-glass off and laid it on the counter. “And what would young people such as yourselves wish to buy in here with your thousands of pengos? You’re somewhat young to be engaged.”

“Arrow-Cross coming down the street,” said Benjamin, “How do you lock this door?”

“Leave it to me,” said the manager, rushing around the counter and drawing the window and door blinds, then slamming the door bolts into place. “Quick, out the back! There’s a store-room.”

The manager turned off the lights and came up behind Helena, pushing her forward. “Come on! Come on! They were in here taunting me the other day. I knew they’d come back.”

Helena tripped on the step between the two rooms, grabbed the edge of the door and pushed herself through. “It’s dark in here!”

“There’s a light switch on your right, just near your shoulder. Turn it on.”

Helena flicked the switch down and a single fly-speckled bulb somewhat illuminated the room where boxes were piled high.

“We’d better go down, just in case,” said the manager.

Benjamin closed the door behind them. “Down? Down where?”

“There’s a trap-door behind those boxes. It hides a basement that I had built, just in case.”

“Does anyone else know about that? said Benjamin.

The manager shook his head. “Only my family and my tailor friend, Isaac, next door.”

Benjamin saw a recessed handle on the floor, half hidden by some newspapers.

“The manager came up behind him. “You look strong enough. Pull it up!”



It took Benjamin two pulls and the cover opened to reveal winding steps going down. “Light switch on the left . . . there, do you see?”

Benjamin stepped down. Yes, I see it. What happens down there if the electricity is cut off?”

“Well” said the manager, with a grimace, “It becomes dark, doesn’t it. Let’s pray that never happens. Now, down you go, ladies first.”

We won’t stand on ceremony,” said Benjamin. I’m better off going first, then I’ll see you safely down, Lena.”

“That’s fine by me. You can placate any ghosts with your handsome winning ways.”

“We haven’t got all day,” said the manager. Come on, move!”

It was then that they heard the banging on the front door, followed by a shattering of glass.

“It had to come,” said the manager, easing his way through the opening as Helena reached the floor.

“Now,” he said, lowering the cover and slamming a bolt into place. “We’re safe for the time being.”

Helena eyed the surroundings. There were a number of wooden chairs and a bench-type bed against one of the walls. In one corner stood a tiny kitchenette with shelves packed with tins and small cardboard boxes. A small alcove hid what she thought may have been a toilet, but surely impossible down here? But then she noted the sink in another corner with a tap running into it. Where did it drain to? Surprisingly, there was no smell of damp in the room, which was large enough to take at least twelve people at a light crush. As above, a single light bulb illuminated the hide-a-way, casting just enough light to read by. There was a small stack of books on the floor.

“This is amazing!” she said, and there was a mumble of assent from Benjamin.

“I’d better introduce myself,” said the jeweller. “My name is Simon . . . Simon Klein. And yes, I had this built back in ‘38 because I could see the writing on the wall, so to speak. I imported the labor, so almost no one here in Budapest would know about this hiding place. What I envisaged back then has all come true, sadly enough. As it is, trade has been dropping off. So many friends and customers are leaving. I really cannot see a future for my family here in Budapest. It may be time to consider an escape route, but where to go? The Russians may save us from the fascists, but what then?”

There were heavy crashing noises from above. “It looks like they mean business this time. I’ve only had a broken window once, but I fear there won’t be much left of my shop this time. And you are . . . ?

Benjamin and Helena introduced themselves, then Helena paled. “Oh my goodness . . . the violin! Benjamin! Where’s my violin?”

Benjamin’s face flushed. “Oh heck. I left it in the store room, perhaps they won’t find it!”

Simon shook his head. “Perhaps, perhaps . . . those people will take anything valuable. I’m sorry Helena, but I do think you will have to look for another one.”

“Papa will kill me!”

Benjamin looked away. “I’m sure Mr. Weisz won’t mind making you another one, Lena. He closes his surgery at 4.00, so he has time enough before the evening meal to work in that little cabin of his out the back.” He stared at the jeweller, taking in his short stature, an almost perfectly rounded face with blue eyes and a thin growth of whiskers, who was sitting on one of the chairs with his hands interlocked. Benjamin noticed the blue veins on the top of the man’s hands. Isaac Klein wasn’t all that young, in fact, thought Benjamin, he looks a little like my grandfather. “He took me down there the other week and showed me his tools and instruments all lined up so neat, and so clean, it could have been an operating theatre.”

Simon looked up. “Did you say Weisz, the doctor?”

Helena was still looking at Benjamin with pressed lips. “Yes, that’s my father, Leopold Weisz.”

Simon’s eyes brightened. “He was my family doctor until I moved my family over into Pest! He delivered two of my children, both girls; most perfectly too, if I may say so. When we leave here, Helena, you must remember me to your father, such a wonderful man.”

“By the way Mr. Klein,” said Benjamin, averting his eyes from Helena. “What happens when the air in here runs out? It feels a little stuffy already.”

Simon looked up from his hands, “Oh it can’t?”

“Can’t?”

“No, it can’t. I’ve had a ventilation system built in. See those grilles up on the ceiling!”

Benjamin shaded the light bulb with his hand and saw a number of slits in the ceiling. “But, how does it work. I mean, how does the air circulate?”

Helena looked up at the ceiling then back at Simon Klein. “He’s going to be an engineer, so that’s why he has all these questions on the tip of his tongue.” She looked back at Benjamin with her lips still pressed firm. But if



he cannot look after something as straightforward as a violin in its case, I doubt he will ever succeed as an engineer or even a night soil carter.”

Benjamin’s face flushed. “Lena . . .!”

“I expect this will be a great lesson for your friend, Helena. Yes, it may well be a significant loss, considering all the time your father has put into making it, and perhaps, just perhaps, the Arrow-Cross mob don’t find it, it may be recovered.”

“I wouldn’t think so,” said Helena, “Not with all that noise they’re making up there. I fear they are smashing everything they can lay their hands on.”

Simon stood up and walked toward the small kitchenette. “See this!” he said, touching a half-hidden switch. “Now, when I turn it on . . .” He flicked the switch downwards and there was a muffled sound of air whispering within what seemed like a system of tunnels above.

“Amazing!” said Benjamin. “You could stay down here for weeks, if not months. You’re a clever man Mr. Klein.”

Helena scratched her head. “But what about . . . you know . . . human waste? What do you do with that if it becomes necessary?”

The jeweller smiled. “Oh, that’s taken care of. You see that curtain there. Pull it to one side.” Benjamin moved across the room and slid the curtain away. There was a trapdoor in the floor.

“Don’t open it . . . or if you do, hold your nose tight.”

“I get it,” said Helena. It’s some sort of waste closet.”

“Yes, it goes down quite some way. It’s fine while the trapdoor is sealed shut, does smell a little when open . . . but yes, you wouldn’t be aware of any odour, would you? Time takes care of it down there in a charcoal pit.”

“You seem to have thought of everything, Mr. Klein,” said Benjamin, “but what if someone places something heavy over the trapdoor above and we can’t get out?”

“There is a code. See that metal panel near the bed? There is a shaft that goes upward. Three taps followed by five then three again, alerts my friend the tailor, next door. Oh, and there are other codes that we share between us.”

“I’m blown away by all of this,” said Helena. “It’s a shame I can’t bring father down to inspect, but maybe not because I know what he’d be doing at home . . . building a safe place for our family, and making a new violin too.” She glared at Benjamin.

Leopold Weisz left the Relief and Rescue Committee of Budapest feeling optimistic. He had listened to the various speakers putting their case forward for helping the Jews of other countries to reach Hungary, where it was considered, there was reasonable safety under the very noses of the fascists.

Meeting with the founders of the committee, Joel and Hansi Brand, and also Israel Kasztner, Leopold was impressed at the work that had already been accomplished. He had said to Anna the other night that we must trust the Zionists because they were helping in circumstances that were obviously very dangerous, putting their lives on the line. They had invited Oskar Schindler to Hungary come this summer to discuss further help he might be able to give to the Hungarian Jews. Joel had already outlined the help that Schindler was doing in employing Jews from the Krakow camp into his enamel factory, keeping them safe and so far free from deportation. There was more that Schindler could do, said Joel, like passing messages, arranging extra food for those in confinement, and smuggling Hungarian Jews when opportunity arises. Yes, said Joel, he’s a bit of a drinker, a womaniser, but he’s now the inside man who can help enormously. I can’t believe our luck!

Leopold remembered that Anna had asked him to get some shallots and chives for an egg-plant dish she would be making for the evening meal and there was a greengrocer he knew, just behind Vaci Street, who would have those in stock and within walking distance of the meeting room. He tipped his hat at the female secretary who had been taking notes, pulled his scarf up around his neck and sauntered out into the cold. Bitter, he thought, must be at least twenty degrees below zero. It had stopped snowing, but the footpath was icy, slippery, quite dangerous he thought. One could easily fall and spend a time in hospital, or worse. He made a quick look at his Swiss watch . . . nearly five-o’clock . . . everyone would be at home waiting for him. In spite of the icy pavement he hurried along. He was about to turn into the alley that led down toward the greengrocers when he noticed the police car outside Simon Klein’s jewellery store. An attempted burglary, perhaps! Better take a look.

The store was roped off, with a young gendarme standing in the doorway, hands behind his back, watching the passers-by. Leopold could hardly believe what he saw; the plate glass window was no more and all the jewellery stands in the window were empty. It was a mess.



He walked up to the gendarme. “Good evening . . . is Mr. Klein alright?”

The gendarme peered at him. “No sign of him, sir. He must have locked up and gone home prior to this occurring. My sergeant is trying to contact him.”

“I see. What do you think happened here? It looks like a bomb has hit it!”

“Oh, nothing to concern yourself with, sir. I’d move on before my sergeant returns, if I were you.”

“Not very civil of you, young man!”

“Yes, well, it’s not a request. Just move on.”

It had recommenced snowing as he pulled the Ford Eifel up outside the gate of his home. Snow was banked up outside the door to his surgery and he knew he would have to remove that before opening on Monday morning. He was going to lock the door to the vehicle when the front door to the house was flung open and Anna came running out.

“Leo! . . . Leo!!!”

He looked up. “What’s happened?” he said as Anna came rushing toward him.

“It’s Lena! She hasn’t come home. Don’t lock the car . . . we have to look for her! Leo!!!”

Theodor Weisz had called on the widow Fodor again, taking her out for a night at the Hungarian State Opera. Judith took his arm as they climbed the golden staircase, anxious to get to their seats as the crowd bustled about them. “Oh my, look at all that gilt!” she said. “My parents brought me here when I was little . . . maybe four or five years old and I’ve never forgotten the dazzling sight of all that gold.”

“Yes, it is incredible, so . . . oh, almost blinding with its intensity? I’ve not been here since my wife, Livia, passed on. We were regulars, often coming when Offenbach’s operettas were presented. But, we are so fortunate tonight to have Puccini’s La Boheme.”

“It’s his best, I think . . . so full of passion. I can’t thank you enough, Theo. You’ve brought me out of my shell. I can’t think what overcame me to be practically locked up in that house for all those years without a male companion.”

“Well, you’re out now, broken from the mold and we shall celebrate with supper at Gundel’s. Their French cuisine is the best in all of Budapest. I’ve booked a table.”

It was almost midnight when they reached the door to Judith’s home.

“You must come in for a night-cap,” she said. “You mentioned something about family news that you wished to share. Come, Theo, out of the cold.”

He pushed the door open and followed her down the hall and into the parlour. When she had poured them a small port wine each, they settled on the chaise longue.

“Now, what’s this all about?”

“Well, it’s rather strange. My grand-daughter, Helena, was in the city with her young boy-friend Benjamin Sabot, and they were caught up with some of the Arrow-Cross thugs . . . had to hide in Simon Klein’s jewellery store basement. Apparently, he had built a safe house down there with food, reading materials and such. All self-contained. From what I gather they couldn’t get out because the Arrow-Cross rats had somehow covered the escape hatch. Simon had some kind of a code that he could tap on the wall and Isaac the tailor next door would come and assist . . . but he’d gone for the day so they were trapped there all night until he arrived the next morning. My son and my daughter-in-law were frantic, as also were Benjamin Sabot’s family. Everyone was out all night long, including police, searching, but they were not discovered until the next day.”

“My goodness, fancy that! Go on.”

“Yes, that was a surprise to me. Well, the Arrow-Cross mob had wrecked the jewellery store, taking what they could. Simon seems to have disappeared . . . no one knows where he and his family have gone . . . they seem to have vanished into thin air.”

“Was Helena all right? She wasn’t hurt?”

Theodor shook his head. He took a sip from the port wine and sighed. “No, but she was rather distraught about losing her violin. The case was in the storeroom, broken, but no sign of the violin her father had made for her.”

“Oh, that’s really sad, Theo, really sad.”

Theodor shrugged. “Yes, my son put a lot of work into that. Perhaps it will turn up, after all I can’t see any of those Arrow-Cross thugs using it. They may try to sell it, so the police will be watching the second-hand dealers.”

“Let’s hope and pray it comes back to her, such a precious gift from her father. Now, Theo, it’s rather late, so would you like to stay the night?”

To be continued



Con Clusion



the week that was



The initial program of Prisoner 951 on SBS Channel 3, Wednesday 4th March, showed how the cruel Iranian prison system works. You are always guilty now matter how much you protest and are almost always sentenced on twisted charges. This British inspired series is based on true occurrences. If you missed the first episode, it may be viewed at SBS On Demand at <https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/tv-series/prisoner-951> However, *Cat's Eye Weekly* disagrees somewhat with the title of the program, which appears to be one of convenience. As of 2025, there were approximately 6,880 female prisoners in Iran's prisons. Many taken there simply because they did not cover their hair in public.

And as far as Donald Trump's sudden war on Iran is perceived, it will be up to historians of the future to decide. To all appearances it shows lack of intelligence and sudden haste, in that all avenues were not fully explored and that brute force is the only answer. The former war crimes judge, Geoffrey Robertson, considers that the present assault on Iran is a war crime. That the Iran regime is totally evil, there is no doubt.

That there needs to be change there is no doubt. That the former supreme leader, Ayotallah Ali Khamenei, was responsible for the slaughtering of hundreds of thousands of people, there is no doubt. And that the recent call by some Australian mosque leaders, particularly in NSW, for Australian Muslims to mourn the death of the brutal Ayotallah, is abhorrent to Australian values, there is no doubt. That Donald Trump was surprised by the sudden retaliation of Iran in targeting so many Middle Eastern neighbours with missiles and drones, also shows a total lack of intelligence, not only by him, but by his security advisors such as the CIA. Out of touch with Middle Eastern values? Possibly so. They were out of touch with the values of Iraq 2003-2011. An infamous war of deception.

Meanwhile, Geoffrey Robertson concludes that the recent actions are tantamount to reducing the values of decent democracies and flies in the face of international law. But the elusive question still hangs in the air: How close was Iran to finalising a nuclear bomb that would devastate the region? Both Israel and America would say, very close. Then again, does this latest incursion have the age old implication that it is nothing about caring for regime change; it is simply about the control of oil supplies? •

"Nothing feeds forgetfulness better than war, Daniel. We all keep quiet and they try to convince us that what we've seen, what we've done, what we've learned about ourselves and about others, is an illusion, a passing nightmare. Wars have no memory, and nobody has the courage to understand them until there are no voices left to tell what happened, until the moment comes when we no longer recognize them and they return, with another face and another name, to devour what they left behind.

Carlos Ruiz Zafon in The Shadow of the Wind



Please adopt me: My name is Servo.
 Animal ID: 1018018 Breed: Domestic Short Hair:
 Gender: Male. \$235 includes vaccination.
 Microchip Number: 956000018377367
 Source Code: BR100934
 Pick up at Pet Barn - Preston
 Health Check. De-sexed.
 Check in at: <https://rspcavic.org/adopt-a-pet/pet/?petId=1018018>