

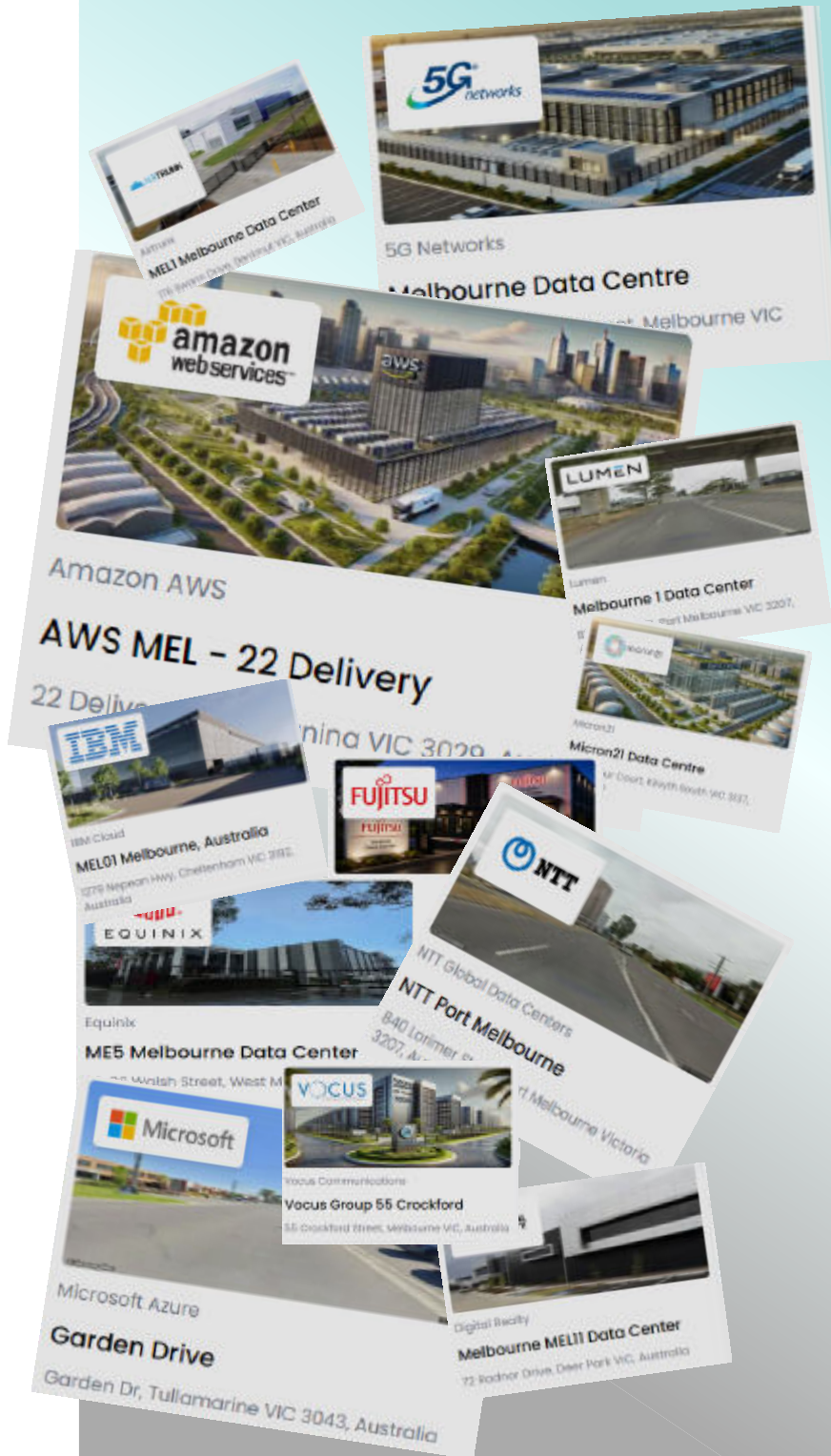
Cat's Eye Watch

Previously *Cat's Eye Weekly* No's 1-147

No. 14

18th Sep 2026

Data Centres Melbourne, Victoria



Pix: Datacenters.com

<https://www.catseyewatch.com>

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Racism and Indigenous workers

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The Feminine in the Muslim World

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Political Capers

Love Never Dies chapter 4

The Quiet Corner

Email: graham@genetree1.com



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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The editor's desk



Yes, *Cat's Eye Watch* got it first. Page 18 of CEW No. 13, 04 July 2026. A possible sell off — privatisation — of Melbourne Water, a report now revealed by Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) in a report early August. Code named Project Nerva. This plan initiated in 2024, has been hidden from the public.

Senior Victorian ministers, including former premier Jacinta Allan knew much that was kept from the good citizens of Victoria. More in Political Capers, page 16.

There's always an old song for anyone you meet in the streets — those who greet you, those who don't. But one song pricked my consciousness the other day watching an aged lady struggling to walk with her arthritis. This one went "Little old lady passing by, not a tear in your eye." And there she was with a most gracious smile which takes much courage, in spite of the pain.

Yes, the people passing by who have different memories, different ways of looking at life. Everyone has a story to tell and some you'd rather not hear. But those tucked up in their warm vehicles miss a hell of a lot about life with its brightness and rudeness. Step out from the warm home into the warm car, into the air-conditioned supermarket or major shopping centre; back to the car, back to the home — an encapsulated life simply because it's easier that way. Yes, an encapsulated life, and in some ways a trapped life without wider vision.

The people you meet on the street: the man who shouts now and then because he has memories that cannot be assuaged. Was he a Korean war veteran, a Malayan veteran, a Vietnam or an Afghanistan veteran — often taken away to war without his permission? The lottery marble for national service having fallen into the bowl with his name on it — he'd had no say in the matter, and the explosions that rocked his life were always there in the deep recesses of his mind. The one particular lottery that he didn't wish to be involved with.

The young mother, baby in pram, with a bruised cheek and dark eye-socket — a victim of domestic violence who feels she cannot leave because of her children, so she suffers in silence, a silence so heavy and deep. She walked into a door, didn't she!

The teenage boy who scoots so fast beside you. He's going to be a scientist, you know, because his IQ far outranks everyone else in his class. He's in a hurry to get where he needs to be. The teenage girl, who almost walks into a stream of vehicles because she is concentrating on social media messages and typing a response on her mobile. You shouted your lungs out, didn't you! And she stopped. You were there for a purpose at that time and place.

The middle-aged lady with her cute labradoodle on a lead, braving the wintry elements for essential exercise. No rings on her fingers. Was she engaged once and he simply didn't come back from that war? Her memories are like the finest silk, the most magnificent tapestry. She will never marry because he was her soul partner. Now she works with charity organisations, helping the poor and the needy. She is a saint.

Continued on page 3>>

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

Click onto my purrfect nose!





The Huge Data Centres



Goodman Craigieburn Melbourne Data Centre in Craigieburn, Victoria. Pic: Datacenters.com

Melbourne and suburbs has, so far, 48 giant data centres, with another nine in the pipeline. Not all are new AI installations, though the majority are, and mostly located within the southern central area of the city to the north-western suburbs.

The Victorian state government's position on data centres is: 'Victoria's data centres meet international standards such as ISO 27001, combining efficiency, reliability, and security with sustainable energy and water practices, supporting scalable, cost-effective operations.' The Australian Strategic Policy Institute

may have other ideas. Raelene Lockhorst, writing in *The Strategist* 25 July 2026 counters with concentrating data centres in Melbourne and Sydney is a growing risk, whereas concentrating the centres in the north of the country makes abundant sense, in that northern Australia with its energy resources and land, and its "proximity to Indo-Pacific markets and rising strategic weight, is where a meaningful share of it should be located." *The Strategist* states that so far, Australia doesn't have a national siting strategy and that infrastructure should be a national one and not simply commercial.

Suddenly, the poo has hit the fan and the federal government is on the back foot to catch up. Commercial AI data centres have expanded rapidly with grave implications for energy systems and water resources. So far, all data centres have been built with the approval of state governments without too much attention being given to the availability of energy resources and, in some instances, the noise problem from thousands of cooling fans and other high-tech gear running 24/7.

"Locating data centres in the north also puts energy-intensive industries closer to where energy can be produced. Aluminium smelting, liquefied natural gas processing and minerals refining have historically been done near reliable energy sources, minimising the cost of moving energy. Whether powered by gas, renewables energy or a combination of both, computing capacity should be developed where long-term energy availability is greatest, rather than adding further pressure to already constrained metropolitan electricity networks." New South Wales has 116 data centres with more at planning stage. Recently, plans for a particular data centre in Perth were withdrawn due to the noise factor: the City of Swan's planners considered that if the Hazelmere emergency generators were activated they would massively exceed local daytime and night-time noise thresholds for homes nearby, including a primary school. At long last the federal government has stepped in and will be requiring commercial data centres to abide by certain regulations re. noise, power and water usage by 2027. Again, too little and too late. Governments need a re-think towards looking northwards. •

*The planned data centre at Hazelmere
Photo: Greensquare DC*



"I believe that the abominable deterioration of ethical standards stems primarily from the mechanization and depersonalization of our lives; a disastrous byproduct of science and technology.

Albert Einstein 1948

Editorial from page 2

The young executive who is up to his eyeballs in debt and who is tempted to bypass regulations and shift some products offshore, bypassing shields and checks. Will he steal or won't he? He weighs up his chances, after all it's only a few thousand among the company's profit of \$11 billion.

The young couple, recently married, with joy upon their faces. They'd been childhood sweethearts, often separated by distance and time, but now the qualities they see in each other and the memories they have, are fused into their hearts' desire. They balance each other, aware of the inconsistencies and curious traits within each and quite willing to work with these throughout their long future. Enjoy the days, sunshine or rain! Cheers, *Graham*

The Huge Data Centres 2

On Thursday 10th September *The Age* journalists highlighted the proposal by Greensquare DC — the company named on page 3 re. withdrawal from a Perth project due to complaints — for a new \$1.47 billion data centre at the foot of the West Gate Bridge in Melbourne.

The exclusive article by Clay Lucas and Kieran Rooney shows considerable opposition to the project. The centre is to be built on the old Mobil fuel terminal in Spotswood and *The Age* states that if allowed it would use the electricity of a town only slightly smaller than the City of Geelong.

This is a horrendous proposal. Perry Williams, writing in the *Business Australian* September 10, emphasises that Transgrid, which maintains the largest electricity network in Australia, now states that data centres' giant thirst for electricity shows demand at double the level of what is widely adopted and forecast.

Meanwhile, there is talk in the industry that prime minister Anthony Albanese's renewable energy rules will be 'watered' down once these mega data centres are up and running.

And so much for AI sustaining employment. The proposed \$1.5 billion Greensquare development, when completed, will only need 130 humans on site, whereas in the past that area of land employed thousands. Independent news outlet Michael West Media 8 September, concludes that London data centres are hosing down their cooling systems to prevent fire, and states that another data centre, recently given a permit by the Victorian government, has "a stored onsite backup fuel load of 900 tonnes of lithium-ion (Li-ion) batteries and 3.5 million litres of diesel."

Michael West Media quotes Kristjan Tuul, a firefighter with 20 years' experience, now with the United Firefighters Union, who states "firefighters had not been adequately consulted about emergency preparedness, mitigation measures or the resources that would be required should a major incident occur," and "The development borders Westgate Park, which was the site of a major bushfire in December 2024 and another fire in 2025."

Michael West Media continues: "Fires have also occurred at data centres in Hillsboro, Oregon; Lincoln, Nebraska; Ain, France; Council Bluffs, Iowa; Ogden City, Utah; and Strasbourg, France. As no public global register of accidents or incidents exists, near misses and fires often go unreported." All these fires were contained within the Data Centre Precinct, with no thermal runaways extending beyond the precinct. In Melbourne, the West Gate off-ramp is within the data centre's precinct, which also borders the Port of Melbourne shipping lane.

Tuul warned large volumes of contaminated firefighting water and toxic runoff could also have significant consequences for surrounding infrastructure, including the Port of Melbourne, particularly if emergency services were unable to contain the runoff".

The Greensquare data centre proposal will be built close to residential homes and approximately 60 metres from a kindergarten. A number of concerns that are not shown by Greensquare but are highlighted by a local protest movement, are: a) Fires that won't go out (lithium). b) High voltage works under local streets. c) Heat with nowhere to go (servers running 24/7). d) A hum that never stops. e) What comes out of the stacks? (They emit fine particulates and nitrogen oxides, pollutants). f) The jobs that won't materialise. (Once built, a hyperscale data centre needs very few people to run it).

If you live in the district, contact:

nodatacentreinspotswood@proton.me

facebook.com/groups/nodatacentreinspotswood



Left: Greensquare's rendition. Right: Protest group's art
Both somewhat exaggerated.



The Conversation



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From corporate breakfasts to office morning teas, this week workplaces across Australia will mark NAIDOC Week. Held in early July every year, it's a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' history, culture and achievements.

But even as work colleagues get together to celebrate NAIDOC Week, our recent research shows racism against Indigenous workers is still common. More than half (58%) Indigenous people we surveyed reported experiencing racism sometimes, often, or very often at work.

It's little wonder a parliamentary inquiry on racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has had almost 600 submissions. That inquiry is holding hearings around Australia for at least another month.

Those hearings come in the wake of an attempted bombing of a peaceful Invasion/Survival Day rally in Boorloo/Perth on January 26 this year. A 31-year-old man was charged with engaging in a terrorist act, after allegedly throwing a home-made explosive into a crowd of thousands of people. Luckily, it failed to detonate.

In that context, what more can workplaces do about racism against Indigenous people all year around?

Our research points to three practical, proven solutions for employers – plus a gap in national workplace policy that's yet to be fixed.

The glacial pace of change

Our Centre for Indigenous People and Work published the Gari Yala: Speak the Truth report earlier this year. It's based on a survey of 1,158 Indigenous workers, balancing people living in cities, rural, regional and remote locations. It also reflects diversity in gender, Indigenous people with caring responsibilities and with disability, and rainbow mob.

It's the only Australian report of its kind: capturing Indigenous experiences of work, told and developed by First Nations people.

Our research shows how racism at work – both institutional and between individuals – does real harm. It drives down job satisfaction, makes people more likely to look for another job, and stops people recommending their employer to others.

In our first survey back in 2020, just 26% of Indigenous workers reported having never heard racial slurs or “jokes” about Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people at work. When we ran the survey again in 2025, it was 29%.

That is a small sign of improvement. But if that rate of change continues, it will take generations before Indigenous workers no longer have to hear racist comments at work.

Among the most striking findings in this latest survey were the practical differences that showed up between workplaces with and without Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs).

Why having his plan matters

Our analysis found:

Half (50%) of Indigenous workers in RAP organisations rarely or never experience racism, compared to 36% elsewhere



RAP organisations are three times more likely (34% versus 10%) to have both an anti-racism complaints process and training

RAP organisations were more likely to strengthen career pathways for Indigenous employees. RAP organisation employees reported reduced burdens of unpaid cultural labour, such as not being asked to organise Reconciliation Week events, or being asked a large number of questions based on their identity.

As one person in their 40s from Brisbane said:

In the past I would not openly share my Indigenous identity at work due to fear of racism in the workplace and from customers [...] In my current workplace I shared my identity as I felt safe to do so and was involved in RAP working groups and an Indigenous employee network.

RAPs are not a silver bullet. But they do provide structure and accountability for organisations. That makes them one of the most practical tools we have to drive change in workplaces.

For employers, expanding the reach, quality and ambition of RAPs is one of the most effective ways to build fairer, more inclusive workplaces.

Two areas workplaces are lagging on:

In addition to developing RAPs, the 1,158 people we surveyed told us two more things made a real difference to feeling safer at work: anti-racism complaint procedures and anti-discrimination training.

However, we also found an alarming lack of progress:

Only one in three employees we surveyed said their organisation had a racism complaint procedure. Only 36% said their organisation provided relevant anti-discrimination training. Only 21% said their organisation provided both (training and complaint procedure). These figures have barely moved since the first Gari Yala survey in 2020.

Many reported that when racism was raised, systems failed to respond effectively – or even punished the complainant. As one person told us: Every single person I have reported for racial discrimination to my supervisor has been promoted.

A regional Queensland worker in their 40s summed up what needs to change:

When racism is reported, it must be taken seriously, acted upon swiftly and met with appropriate outcomes. Ignoring it only reinforces unsafe environments and silences First Nations voices. 'I feel I'm making a difference': how Blak women are working to build safer workplaces

Tackling racism like sexism

Having a Reconciliation Action Plan, proper anti-racism complaint procedures and anti-discrimination training are all ways employers can make a real difference on racism at work.

But we also need more proactive prevention and accountability.

That's why our Centre for Indigenous People and Work, along with others including the federal race discrimination commissioner, have called for racism to be treated as seriously as sexism under the law.

Since December 2022, Australian workplaces have had a "positive duty" under the Sex Discrimination Act.

This imposes a legal duty on employers to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sexual discrimination and harassment.

So far, there has been little movement on bringing in a similar duty on racism. But we are hopeful the current inquiry on racism against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will consider whether this could make a difference.

Authors

Disclosure statement

Nareen Young receives research funding from NAB Foundation. She is a member of the National Tertiary Education Union and the Australian Labour Party.



As well as being the assistant director of the Centre for Indigenous People and Work at the University of Technology Sydney, Josh Gilbert is the Aboriginal Co-Chair of Reconciliation NSW.



Jane O'Leary does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.

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<https://theconversation.com/how-employers-can-get-serious-about-tackling-racism-against-indigenous-workers-286357>

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Preventing and addressing family violence is at the core of Djirra's work. All our programs support Aboriginal women's journey to safety and wellbeing. Our programs are trusted, rich in culture, trauma informed, and promote the important work of Djirra, including by offering safe, alternative ways for women to learn about and access family violence and legal supports.

<https://djirra.org.au> info@djirra.org.au Free call: 1800 105 303



Adopt a greyhound & welcome a new best friend

Courtesy of Greyhound Racing Victoria



Heidi is a beautiful girl with a gentle and affectionate nature. Quiet, calm and wonderfully polite, she takes life in her stride and loves making friends with everyone she meets. Sweet and personable, Heidi is a lovely companion who will happily fit into a relaxed home.

Details: Assisted Rehoming Program - Contact GAP for more info. Microchip No: 956000015935369
PER Source No: BR101124. Child tolerant.
Express your interest: <https://gap.grv.org.au/dogs/heidi-arp#form>

Lad is a gentle soul with a loving heart. This quiet, calm greyhound enjoys a relaxed lifestyle and is happiest spending time with his people, soaking up affection and enjoying the comfort of a peaceful home. Although Lad is blind, he navigates life with quiet determination and, with patience and support, forms strong bonds with those who earn his trust. His sweet nature and easy-going temperament make him a wonderful companion for someone looking for a loyal and affectionate friend.

Details: Tullamarine Adoption Centre Microchip No: 956000014503263
PER Source No: BR101124
Quick Stats: Child tolerant. Small dog tolerant.
<https://gap.grv.org.au/dogs/lad-3263-494a9#form>



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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)



Ollie is a 5 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and micro-chipped 22kg male Harrier who's looking for a loving home. (Harriers are smaller than Foxhounds but larger than Beagles).



He's a very affectionate boy who loves snuggling up to his favourite people. He would love to be a treasured member of the family, but would need a family with dog experience, as he can be quite stubborn and requires a calm and confident 'top dog.'

Ollie's an active boy as well, so would suit an active family happy to exercise/ walk him daily. An all adult home or one with dog savvy teenagers, would suit.

Ollie loves the company of other dogs, so a home with another friendly dog, his size or smaller, would be ideal. He was once bitten by a German Shepherd, so isn't great with Shepherds and occasionally some other large breed dogs if they're being particularly dominant. He would not suit a home with cats or other small animals.

He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. A home with a dog door would be great, as he's used them before.

Ollie's adoption fee is \$550. Microchip Number: 956000013323606. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Dingley Village based, but we go to you).



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

Addison is a 7 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. Addison would suit someone 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 a bit weary of dogs that 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 \$450. Microchip Number: 956000007788798. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Geelong based, but we go to you).



India is a 6 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and micro-chipped 14kg female Beagle x Cavalier, who's looking for a loving home.

She's an incredibly sweet and affectionate girl who would love to be a treasured member of the family. She's also an active girl who enjoys her daily walks and playing with other dogs. An all adult home or one with gentle, dog savvy, older children would suit.

India is really good with other dogs and is also cat friendly. She'd thrive in a home with another gentle but active dog for company. Otherwise, a home with someone who's home during the day would also suit.

She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Regular grooming would also be required.

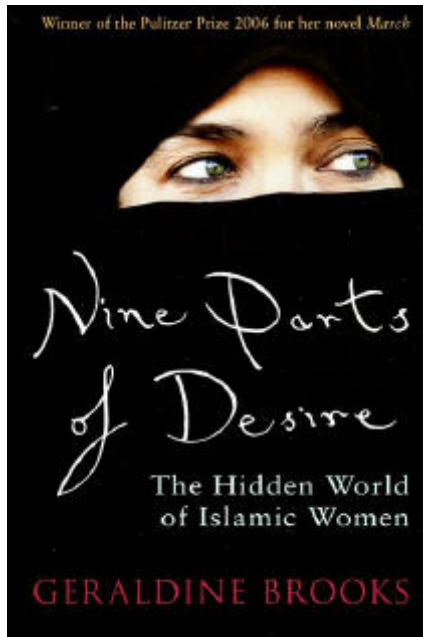
India's adoption fee is \$750. Microchip Number: 953010004382799. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Highett based, but we go to you).

Let no one keep you from your journey
You are the only explorer
Your heart, the unreadable compass
Your soul, the shore of a promise
Too great to be ignored

Mark Nepo



The Feminine in the Muslim World



There has been some criticism of Geraldine Brooks' *Nine Parts of Desire*, particularly from Geoff Lumetta of the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, who wrote that Brooks should have made a comparison with women in the West "in order to gain a universal perspective," and Victor T. Le Vine of the *St. Louis Post - Dispatch*, who wrote "[the book] is not a work of scholarship, and as perspective, intelligent and sympathetic reportage it is more than worth the price of admission."

But these are men, and what would they know about women's affairs and culture? Bronwyn Drainie of *The Globe and Mail* writes: "[Women] have access to and empathy with the half of the world's population whose lives are so often ignored by the Western press and media."

Drainie concludes: This "demonstrates the best possible reason for employing women as foreign correspondents." CEW agrees, for how else is the world to know about the affairs of women under countries ruled either by religion or dictators?

The book is not an easy read for those who come from a background of intense Islamic belief — in fact, Brooks shows that much that is seen as negative by feminists and other enlightened minds, is not a command from the Koran (Qu'ran — the literal word of God by the Prophet Muhammad), such as female genital mutilation or even various methods of face covering. These generally

derive from mediaeval practices and are not a commandment. (*Nine Parts of Desire* pp36-37). Apart from Muhammad's own family, face covering as such, was introduced by the third 3rd Caliph of the Rashidun Caliphate, who reigned November 644 – 17 June 656, who, it seems, had eleven wives.

The Guardian writes: "While working as a foreign correspondent in the Middle East, white female Brooks had a hard time doing her job; shunned by Muslim men for interviews, refused access to politicians and denied opportunities that were offered readily to male colleagues. Brooks made use of these obstacles, focusing instead on telling the personal stories of women in Islamic countries, getting intimate access to women in royalty and the poor."

Nine Parts of Desire is an exciting read and should be read by men, because it opens up the lives of women in the Middle East and elsewhere in Asia

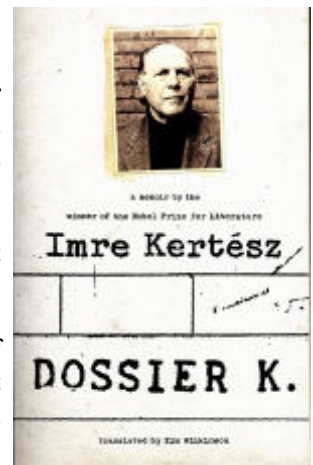
Nine Parts of Desire by Geraldine Brooks.
Bantam Books 2007

A Nobel prize winner reflects on his life, including a time in Auschwitz

It is a provocative book — with the author self-interviewing. He asks himself questions, then answers them in a most enlightening fashion.

Hungarian born Imre Kertész is the author of *Fatelessness*, *Fiasco*, and *Kaddish for an Unborn Child* — spending some time during World War II from the age of 14 in Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps. Born in Budapest 1929, he was fired from his position as a journalist for not adhering to the Communist party doctrine after 1945. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature for "writing that upholds the fragile experience of the individual against the barbaric arbitrariness of history." Kertész was the first Hungarian to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. His writings were influenced by Kafka, Camus, and Mann. *Dossier K* is a truth-telling book.

Andrew Ervin, writing in *The Miami Herald*, states that "Imre Kertész is one of those rare authors, like George Orwell or Franz Kafka, whose work is so insightful about the sinister threats made against the human condition that his name should be used as an adjective. A unique book, not only for historians, but for all who wish to understand the wiles of the human creature. *Dossier K*. Melville House, Brooklyn & London.



Did you know? Using GPS all the time, instead of relying on your instinct and knowledge, lowers your brain activity and is one of the pointers towards dementia.



Is your supermarket killing you?

Melbourne's Channel 7 Spotlight program Sunday September 6th highlighted the immense amount of additives that are baked or added into numerous everyday packaged foods, which really is one horrible story.

Without care and observation we are placing in our stomachs food additives that are poisoning us and reducing our lifespan. And supermarkets are to blame. But do they care?

In essence it is the food makers, the preparers, or producers, who are the real criminals in this matter, but supermarkets are also liable for placing many of these very unhealthy products on their shelves.

Many food producers are in the flavour business putting additive taste before nutrients. Spotlight investigator, Liam Bartlett, interviewed young mother Nabula el Mourid, whose son's hyperactivity led her to understand that it was the food he was consuming that was the cause. Bartlett asked "How did you originally come to look at ultra processed foods?" Her reply was that she considered that was junk food, e.g. processed chips, lollies etc., not realising that the cracker-barrel and yoghurt she was buying were actually ultra processed foods.

Nick Chartres, University of Sydney professor, tells Bartlett that there is an extra level of processed foods which is termed ultra-processed, containing colouring, flavouring, emulsifiers etc., which are added to foods which "are millions of products causing harm to human health." Chartres is a public health scientist. Bartlett states that Chartres has spent years probing how the food industry has sold its big lie: "The majority of foods or products that are mentioned aren't actually foods . . . they're not foods in the traditional sense that would have like a fruit or vegetable, or a piece of meat or egg—something that hasn't been broken down from its original state."

"When the food product is broken down it doesn't look anything like real food, so you end up with powder essentially." Bartlett asks "Then why do we call it food?" Chartres' answer is because it is sold as a food — real food broken down to powders and oils, then re-grouped with colourings, flavourings, and emulsifiers with extra layers of salt, sugar and fats "to keep you hooked."



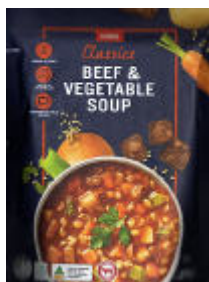
Liam Bartlett. Photo: Spotlight

Bartlett said to Chartres. "Well, what you're describing is a sort of Frankenstein sort of food." Chartres' reply was in the affirmative: "Exactly, exactly what it is. It's commensurate to things like tobacco and alcohol and people aren't aware of it."

Bartlett, standing in a supermarket aisle says: "It's the sheer volume of these things that makes it so difficult these days. Back in the 60's was when your parents or grandparents were shopping in Australia, there was 400 packaged products to choose from; today shoppers have 50 thousand of these things to work their way through, and you can't help but feeling overwhelmed." El Mourid comments that the cheese, for instance, that you put into your child's lunch, is stacked with artificial ingredients to enhance flavour and shelf life. It's not real food anymore.

Nabula el Mourid, with the help of friends and a back-yard office, has detailed thousands of ultra processed foods in our supermarkets and has almost half a million followers on her website. El Mourid says that the only thing you can really trust about a product is what is printed on the back.

Compare these two products: Coles Beef & Vegetables and Heinz new Chicken & Vegetables and then check the ingredients on the back of the pouches.



INGREDIENTS
Water, Vegetables (18%) [Potato, Carrot, Celery, Onion], No Added Hormone Australian Beef (8%), Pearl Barley (7%), Corn Starch, Tomato Paste, Natural Flavours, Salt, Sugar, Vegetable Gum (415), Natural Colours (Plain Caramel, Paprika, Oleoresin), Herb Extracts.

ALLERGY ADVICE
Contains gluten.



INGREDIENTS: Vegetables (49%) [Peas (31%), Broccoli (9%)], Spinach, Potatoes, Water, Corn Starch, Salt, Navy Bean Powder, Yeast Extract, Lime Juice, Natural Flavours, Brown Sugar, Spice.

May Contain: Soy.

Surprise! The Heinz soup has virtually no additives compared to Coles.

But what exactly do they mean by 'Natural flavours'?

Nabula el Mourid's website on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/supermarket.swap/?hl=en>



Photo: Credit Reddit



Nabula el Mourid
Photo: Spotlight



The Chinese made vehicles that are spying on you

Is history about to repeat itself?

There is a true story that is told concerning one of Australia's wartime prime ministers. In 1938, dock workers laid down their tools in protest, being of the view that the Australian government's export of pig iron to Japan would come back to us in the form of bombs and other ammunition.

The dockers were right and the prime minister of the time, Sir Robert Gordon Menzies, was heralded with the nickname 'Pig iron Bob'. That which you send to other countries may possibly be returned to you in some other fashion, given time.

Iron exports to China from Australia have that possibility if there is a military conflict from China's promise to aggressively take control of Taiwan. Therein lies the possibility of what we send to China may rebound upon ourselves. Now, it comes to light, that what we buy from China may well be almost as dangerous. The sudden explosion of China made vehicles, in particular EV's, has prompted our security people to explain that these vehicles are monitored by the Chinese Communist Party from the mainland of China, making them virtually spy vehicles.

Back in August 2026 Britain's Ministry of Defence was shocked to find that their 20 unmanned K3 Scout vessels were being monitored by China. Built by Kraken Technology in Britain, the software in the cameras was reporting to an internet address in China. So, it's not necessarily the type or product of the car/boat/plane or where it is assembled — it's a matter of where do the components come from? In this instance was the on-board camera made in China?

Once again: Kevin Rudd on China

Australia's most expert researcher and Mandarin speaker on China, Kevin Rudd, has done it again. He has given us the warning that china isn't about to play nice when dealing with Taiwan and numerous other countries that have sympathy for that island state.

As we've stated in the past, democracies are messy, but dictatorships know what they are doing and where they are going. Rudd's assessment of the situation between China and Taiwan is that there is a one-in-three chance of China on the attack by 2028. Whether America or Australia would come to Taiwan's aid is still an unknown quantity. Because of our geographical position it is unlikely that Australia could remain independent of such a conflict. Everything regarding China/Taiwan is uncertain.

One single factor is in China's favour — president Trump's removal of a portion of troops and infrastructure from South Korea and his coziness toward the ruler of North Korea, Kim Jong Un.

The truth about AI: Artificial Intelligence.

We are playing with something we really do not understand. We are giving AI everything we know and rewarding it as it learns to reason and expect. That expectation continues to grow, achieving goals after goals, and any attempt to control AI's growth and limit its expectation of what it could become will soon be met with lies, deception, cover-ups. Numerous AI experts and certain originators — even Bill Gates — now consider that AI will learn how to cause the extinction of humankind. Maybe it will act on that, maybe it won't, but AI will soon surpass human knowledge and no longer need us. That is a prime fact. We give AI problems to solve and it solves them. If we become a problem to AI, the answer is simple. End of story.

Vale: Dolly Parton, USA. 1946-26 Aug 2026. A legend and a great philanthropist has left us.
Mary Gaudron 1943-September 2026. First female judge of Australia's High Court: Gaudron was a champion of women in the legal profession — a woman of compassion and integrity, who broke the mould for others to follow.

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Australia's Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion has ended its public hearings after months of evidence about antisemitism, extremism and the Bondi Beach terror attack.

The commission was established in January following the attack on a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi on December 14 2025, which killed 15 people.

But its task is much broader than investigating just that attack.

It has been asked to examine the extent and causes of antisemitism in Australia. This includes extremism and radicalisation, and how antisemitism affects Australian Jews. It must also examine what governments and institutions can do about it.

The extensive, wide-ranging evidence has revealed a complicated, alarming story about antisemitism and hate in Australia's institutions, workplaces and everyday life.

Who has the commission heard from?

The commission opened in February and has since held nine blocks of public hearings between May and August.

By its final block, it had heard from 340 witnesses and received more than 20,000 submissions.

The witnesses reflect the commission's broad task. Australian Jews, including students, academics, teachers, healthcare workers, artists and many others, have described their experiences of antisemitism. University leaders, politicians, community and religious organisations, police, intelligence officials and experts on extremism and social cohesion have also given evidence.

Some evidence about Bondi has been heard privately. This is because it could affect national security or the criminal case against the surviving alleged attacker.

Broadly speaking, the evidence has been about three main themes: how institutions have responded to antisemitism, whether Bondi could have been prevented and how Australia can better protect social cohesion.

1. Institutional responses

Australian Jews have reported abuse and exclusion in universities, schools, workplaces, healthcare settings, cultural organisations, and online.

Security has become part of everyday life for some Jewish communities. Melbourne's Bialik College told the commission its security costs had increased by 230% since 2022.





The commission heard about children being excluded from birthday parties and Australian Jews becoming less comfortable openly expressing their Jewish identity.

Based on my research on hate and extremism, one key factor behind the discrimination reported by Australian Jews is the conflation of Jewish identity with the policies of Israel and the war in Gaza.

Criticism of Israel and advocacy for Palestinians should not be considered in themselves antisemitic. But holding all Australian Jews responsible for the actions of the Israeli government is part of the problem described in the hearings.

Institutions have often struggled to respond to these experiences. One Jewish academic at the University of Wollongong received a threatening six page antisemitic letter. He found there was no specific university process for reporting it. Instead, he had to use a general workplace health form.

But another issue has proved even harder for many institutions: what exactly should they treat as antisemitism? There is disagreement about where criticism of Israel or Zionism ends and antisemitism begins. The commission uses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism.

Some witnesses support this approach. Others, including the Jewish Council of Australia, worry it could restrict legitimate criticism of Israel.

Research from our Tackling Hate Lab that I presented at the hearings shows how the conflict has affected different communities.

In short, anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim hate increased significantly after the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7 2023 and the ensuing war in Gaza. The Bondi attack further exacerbated both types of hate.

[Read more: New study of 2 million online posts shows persistent anti-Jew and anti-Muslim hate in Australia](#)

2. Could Bondi have been prevented?

This is a different question, requiring different solutions.

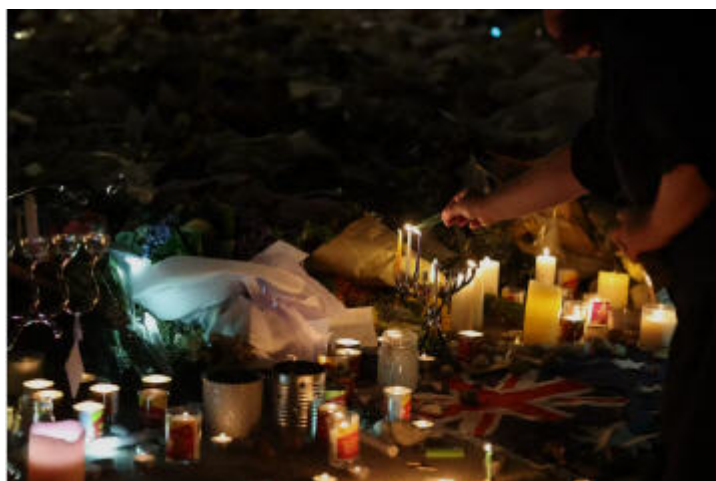
The commission has examined what security and intelligence agencies knew about the Bondi attackers and what they did with that information.

It has looked at how agencies share intelligence, firearms licensing, and security at the Hanukkah event. It also considered whether authorities had the powers and resources needed to intervene.

It has examined radicalisation: the process through which people and groups can adopt increasingly extreme ideas and, in some cases, become willing to use violence.

Evidence has explored the role of online environments and ideological and religious influences. The commission has also examined early intervention and deradicalisation programs, which aim to reach people at risk of moving towards extremist violence.

The hearings have raised questions about possible gaps in Australia's security system.



The commission was established in the wake of the December 2025 Bondi terror attack. Rounak Amini/AAP

But they have not yet established that a particular intelligence or security failure caused the Bondi attack.

That distinction matters. The final report will need to establish what authorities could reasonably have known and done before the attack.

3. How should Australia respond while maintaining social cohesion?

The evidence gathered during the public hearings points to three different levels of prevention, known as the public health model of countering violent extremism.



First, at the broader social level, social cohesion describes how well people from different groups live together, trust institutions and accept common democratic rules. Stronger relationships between communities, education and better institutional responses may help reduce anti-Jewish hate, anti-Muslim hate, and other forms of hate targeting marginalised groups.

Second, when people start moving towards extremism, we need more targeted programs to prevent a trajectory towards violence.

Third, when someone is already radicalised and presents a credible threat of terrorist violence, intelligence gathering, information sharing, threat assessment and police intervention become crucial.

These approaches can also affect each other. Some security measures can undermine social cohesion if they alienate communities or the wider public and reduce trust in institutions.

The challenge is therefore to match the response to the problem, while ensuring attempts to tackle radicalisation and forms of hate such as antisemitism do not create more hostility or division between Australian communities.

[**Read more:** *Testimony as a target: how witnesses at the antisemitism royal commission are being abused online*](#)

The commission itself has operated in this polarised environment.

Some people giving evidence have faced abuse and intimidation. Indigenous academic Marcia Langton, for example, described receiving racist abuse after publicly supporting Australian Jews.

More than a dozen Bondi survivors and eyewitnesses were granted anonymity to protect them from further trauma and threats.

The ongoing criminal case has created another constraint. This is because the commission must investigate what happened at Bondi without releasing evidence that could prejudice the trial.

What happens next?

The commission must now bring all this evidence together.

It has already released an interim report with 14 recommendations, all accepted by the federal government. Its final report was due by December 14, one year after the Bondi attack, but Commissioner Virginia Bell has applied for a four-day extension.

The key questions will be what Australia learns from the evidence, and whether it can develop different responses for different problems.

It will be up to the government to decide whether, and how to implement the recommendations. This will be the real test of whether the royal commission can lead to change and help prevent future attacks like Bondi against Jewish or other communities.

But at the very least, it has already contributed significantly to public debate and awareness of hate and extremism in Australia.

[**Read more:** *Royal commission report doesn't help us start making sense of Bondi terror attack*](#)

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Disclosure statement: Matteo Vergani receives funding from the Australian government (Australian Research Council, Department of Home Affairs) and the Canadian government (Public Safety Canada).

His work focuses on tackling hate and extremist violence, and promoting peace and inclusion in diverse communities. He investigates what drives—and what protects people from—prejudice, discrimination, hate speech, hate crime, and terrorism. Matteo's research is grounded in solid evidence and rigorous methods. He leads evidence reviews, develops validated tools to measure complex social issues, and runs industry-focused projects in partnership with government agencies, community organisations and tech sector. Matteo is passionate about using AI and emerging tech to improve social research and inform practical solutions.



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Political Capers

One has to ask why president Trump and vice-president J.D. Vance were so enthusiastic in promoting the dictator Viktor Orban of Hungary in the recent elections? Orban was well known for his close association with president Putin of Russia, even though Hungary was a member of NATO. The recent landslide elections that brought Orban down bring hope that Hungary is now closer to NATO than it was with Orban as prime minister. But what can we make of America's leading figures in supporting a dictator? Seems rather nonsensical.

Quasi dictators supporting dictators?

President Putin thought Russia would overcome Ukraine in a matter of weeks. President Trump thought he could bring about regime change in Iran in much the same time. Both were wrong. Putin's full-scale war is now in its fifth year. Trump's campaign is now in its seventh month. If you're going to commence a conflict, perhaps you should do your homework first. Numerous advisors would have told both of them not to do what they did. But when you have pig-headed men, who always think they know best, well . . . what's the alternative?

The new premier of Victoria, Ben Carroll, has ripped the carpet from beneath the LNP, virtually stealing many policies from them. The LNP under their new leader, Jess Wilson, would have instituted a Royal Commission concerning the Big Build and the CFMEU's involvement. Carroll has beaten them to it. Previous premiers, Daniel Andrews and Janice Allan will be forced to front up to the commission to explain what they knew about the shady deals that were concocted by the union and other interested parties.



It may not have been intended in this manner, but Pauline Hanson's push for a monoculture in Australia sounds very much like a Chinese Communist Party agenda, where minority ethnicities are kept in place and forced to learn Chinese language and culture. In Australia, if Hanson wins government, immigrants will need to learn Hanson culture, what ever the heck that is! Hanson is often portrayed as a woman who calls a spade a spade, though I think that her spade has shrunk into a small gardening hand trowel.

The indigenous leader, Marcia Langton, when standing up for the Jewish people of this country, has suffered much abuse recently. She accused the pro-Palestine movement of making illogical statements concerning their use of the word 'Zios' to describe Jewish folk, calling it out as another form of xenophobia. She equated this to indigenous racism and the pain her people have had to suffer at the hands of the 'Australia for Whites' movement. By relating the Australian Jewish communities antisemitism to the hate campaigns against the indigenous community, Professor Langton has suffered a backlash. Her car was attacked and she has been called a 'Zio' by the Melbourne pro-Palestine movement. Go figure.

Ben Carroll, the new premier of Victoria, has moved fast to distance himself from the previous premiers Daniel Andrews and Jacinta Allan — stating that he is his own man and not a copy of past leaders. In some aspects this is demonstrated in his willingness to call for a Royal Commission into the corruption of the Big Build and the CFMEU's involvement where millions of dollars of taxpayers money was siphoned off to criminals. Carroll shows that he means business by appointing Chris Kourakis, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of South Australia to lead the enquiry, which is due to commence on September 23 next at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court. The previous premiers will have to front the enquiry to establish what part they played in the Big Build. Some see it as an attack of the right wing of Victoria's Labor Party on the left wing of Andrews and Allan, but if Jess Wilson of the LNP wins the November election, the Royal Commission would go ahead regardless. What Carroll can do about Victoria's almost \$200 billion massive debt is anyone's guess. And a word of advice to Carroll that Andrews and Allen were not hearing: Listen to small business, many of which are going broke. They need help so as to continue to help pay your salary, Ben.

Wire

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"An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last". Winston Churchill



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

Love Never Dies

Chapter 4

Ukraine, Sunday 30th January 1944

The cattle wagon smelled of animal excrement and there was nowhere to sit, crammed in as they were, young and not so young mostly Jewish men, as the steam engine and its wagons rumbled on in the cold night. Sandor Weisz shivered, how did I get here and where are we going? He looked around him at the group of men squeezed in beside him. One of them offered him a cigarette, but he declined, shaking his head. He didn't need it, but maybe later . . . I don't remember boarding these cattle cars, they must have drugged me! One minute I was in Buda with Captain Janos and Sergeant Boda, being cleared to stay as an office clerk, and now? The memory came slowly, yes, that was it . . . earlier, he'd been excused from the front because of his bad leg, but there were pieces of his memory that wouldn't fit, simply blank.

He'd been offered a cup of coffee and they began playing cards waiting for a phone call from Colonel Varga to authorise his appointment . . . yes, that was it . . . and that was his last memory. You bastard, Janos, you slipped something into my coffee, didn't you! He must have been talking out loud because the man next to him looked up: "What's that? Bastards? Yes, they're all bastards young fellow. Anyway, my name is Alex Ungar, I'll be fifty next week . . . some birthday celebration this is going to be, eh? But you, young man, you wouldn't even be twenty, would you?"

"No . . . no . . . not quite. Sandor . . . I'm Sandor Weisz. Where are we going, do you know?"

The man offered him a cigarette again and Sandor took it. "Better have it, young feller 'cos where we're going there won't be any."

"And where would that be?"

"Oh, you don't know? The front my son . . . they'll soon be marching us to the front. Digging ditches it will be, ditches for the soldiers to hide in, ditches for the Russian tanks to fall into. No rifles for us, only spades; clean and sharp like. You could probably take a man's head off with one of them. One of the guards, perhaps. It's the only weapon you'll ever get."

"I've been there with my battalion, the front that is. Got wounded, shrapnel in the left leg, can't really march."

The elder man shook his head. "Well then, you'd better find some way to escape, otherwise if you can't keep up, they'll shoot you and leave you beside the road to rot. Bastards, all of them."

The train rattled over a bridge and the wagon swayed. Sandor clutched at the man for support.

"Surely, they can't do that? We're all Hungarians!"

Alex Ungar nodded, fixed a wry smile on his face. "But we're Jews, young man, Jews! They just want to see our backsides after we labour for them."

It seemed incredulous to Sandor that one could sleep standing up. Several hours had passed with the train winding its way through the Ukraine forests. He dozed, being fortunate to be leaning onto the side of the cattle car, with other men surrounding him, pressing against his body. The cold was bitter and seeped through his jacket, causing him to wake now and then within the swaying wagon. Each time the train made a turning the acrid black smoke from the steam engine blew in through the cracks of the wagon causing the men to sneeze and cough. The cattle stink had been bad enough but when combined with the smoke from the engine, the men felt almost suffocated. When awake Sandor peered through the cracks but all he could see were what may have been dancing trees enveloped in a stygian darkness. The train rattled on, rocking the inmates into a mesmerised state of mind, into a possible journey to a hellish destiny, their minds wild with cruel possibilities.

Several hours later there was a screech of brakes as the wagons jolted the men against each other. The train stopped and with a sudden unlocking of the sliding doors numerous voices from the soldiers shouted "*Mindenki kifelé! . . . kifelé! . . . kifelé!*" Everyone out! . . . Out! . . . Out!

With the other men, Sandor jumped and stumbled down onto the grass, trying to take his bearings. It seemed they had arrived at a small village. The sun was commencing to arise along a misty horizon and it was bitterly cold. Alex Ungar had fallen whilst jumping out of the wagon. Sandor leant down and heaved the man to his feet.

"Thanks, my friend. I'm alright."



Some of the soldiers had whips and they came upon the men ordering the rear carriages to be emptied of heavy sacks that were filled with munitions and army supplies. With his injured leg, Sandor found it difficult to carry the sacks and twice he was whipped over the shoulders by a sergeant. Once, he fell and was kicked, with a guttural voice spitting out "*Kelj fel, te szemét!*" Get up, you bastard!

When the unloading was finished, the men were herded into a large barn, exhausted, with some panting their lungs out, falling thankfully onto the straw covered floor. A meal was brought to them. Sandor looked at his bowl and saw it was what appeared to be stale bread in a watery soup, but he quickly downed it and looked around for more. But there was no more. A lieutenant came to the door of the barn and looked around in the dim light. He also carried a whip. "You have one hour for rest and when you hear the train engine whistle blow you will board the train. Go back to the wagon you were in as before. Is that clear!" Begrudgingly, a murmur of several voices came back to him. With an exasperated look at the men he turned on his heel and strode off. And Sandor felt his weary eyes close.

Budapest Hungary, Sunday 30th January 1944

Helena Weisz stood rooted to the snow-covered ground. She dared not move. Having come from Professor Weismann's studio and finding Benjamin Sabot late, she had trudged her way home. But the sight of all those Arrow Cross uniformed fascists in front of her as she rounded the corner caused a flash of fear to slice through her body.

They too, had stopped and were watching her. Could she turn and run back to the professor's studio? No, she thought, it was too far and they could easily out-run her. She clung to the violin case tightly . . . Oh, if only Ben was here, he'd know what to do. Her eyes darted to the side of the road, left, right, looking for avenues of escape. Most shops were closed, but there was a dress shop on her left that was still open. She didn't hesitate, she regained her motion and headed for the door. At the same time the crowd of Arrow Cross fascists began to move down the street. She opened the door and rushed inside. There was an elderly bespectacled man with a short white beard and a woman of considerable size behind the long counter. They seemed friendly enough. The man looked up from a journal he was writing in: "May we help you?"

Helena stammered, "It . . . it's just that there's a group of . . . nasty men out there heading this way. They don't look friendly, and I think . . ."

The woman butted in "You think they may harm you? Is that it?"

"Yes, yes. May I stay for a while?"

"It must be time for a cup of tea, Amon. I'll take the young lady inside and we'll have a lovely conversation."

The man smiled again. "Yes, that's a great idea, Renée. Do that."

The woman opened the counter flap and ushered Helena through, then opened a door that led to the living quarters behind the shop. She locked the door behind them.

"But what about your husband?" said Helena, clutching the violin case tightly.

"Don't worry. Amon can look after himself, he was a lieutenant in the last war."

"But . . . but . . ."

"Not to worry, little princess. He's stronger than he looks, now, come this way."

The shadows of the Arrow Cross men slanted through the window into the display area. They stopped, as if undecided what to do next. Then, cauliflower ears pushed the handle down and opened the door with a heavy thud. Some of the men filed in after him.

Amon looked up and stared into the eyes of the leader. "Good afternoon, gentlemen. What may I help you with?"

The tall man pushed his bulk up against the counter. "A girl came in here a few moments ago. We need to check her identity, just in case she is a Jew. You understand, don't you?"

Amon rested his right hand a little lower below the counter and with his left, he pointed at the man. "Oh, I understand alright. Whoever comes in here is none of your business. This is a respectable dress shop run mainly by my wife, but I help out when I can, doing the accounts and so on. No, there is no girl here. You must be mistaken."

The tall man leant across the counter, but it was too wide for him to reach Amon. "Now, if that is all," said Amon, "please leave. I have work to do. Besides, we need to close up before dark."

"You're not listening!" said the tall man. "For your better knowledge, I am squad leader Karolj Gönczi, and we'll just take a look through that door, shall we?"

Amon didn't blink. He just stared at the Arrow Cross leader. "I don't think so."

"Oh really now? And who is going to stop us, little man?"

"I am!" Henry reached down and pulled out a .32 calibre Browning M1922 pistol and fired a shot into the ceiling. The acrid smell of gunpowder and primer compounds filled the shop, together with some flakes of plaster



floating down. The Arrow Cross men headed for the exterior door, leaving their leader backing up against the wall, somewhat terrified. Amon pointed the pistol directly at the group leader's face. "I won contests for marksmanship in the last war, my dear friend, Úr Gönczi, so if you wish to keep your right eye intact, and then possibly your left, I suggest you leave now and never return. By the way, I'm very friendly with police general Markus, whom I'm sure you'd wish not to meet. We go to the same church, so be off with you then."

When Amon had closed the blinds and shut the shop, he knocked on the door to the living quarters. His wife unlocked the door, ushered him through and locked it behind him.

"They won't be back, but if by some slim chance they feel unlucky enough to do so, we'd better take some precautions. I'll telephone Markus and get him to send someone around to drive the girl home. Weisz, did you say? That'll be the doctor over in Pest. They are Jews."

"I see. There will be much trouble for them, I'm afraid, no matter how well they fit into society."

"Yes, it won't be the same, Renée. It's somewhat of a toss up as to who will get here first — the Russians or the Nazis. Already there's a large number of Germans here that I don't trust. They can only be reporting back to their Führer. Now, young lady," he said, as he entered the parlour where Helena was sitting with a cup of tea in her hands, "We'll have the good police general, Markus, find someone to drive you home. It's not safe out there on the streets."

It was dark when the DKW F8 police car drove up to the shop. The man, wearing the insignias of a police captain, rang the side entrance door bell while the driver waited with the engine idling. Amon Kasmer took no chances, peering through a spy-hole he had made in the heavy timbered door, his Browning pistol tucked into the rear waistband of his trousers. He opened the door.

"Ah, Captain Baka, so pleased you have come. This way."

They entered the parlour. Renée had slipped a handwritten note into Helena's hand, whispering, "Don't lose it, give it to your papa and then have it burned." She wrapped her arms around Helena and squeezed lightly, then said aloud, "You must come again, sweet girl, when all these troubles are over. Now, go with the good captain and don't forget us. Promise?"

Helena could feel the tears welling up in her eyes, but held them back. "Thank you for all your kindness. I shall never forget what you did for me." She picked up her violin case and stared at the policeman. Captain Baka smiled and nodded to her. "We meet again, young lady. How is your grandfather? He was in the pink of health when I saw him a few months back."

"Zaydeh . . . grandpapa . . . is well, thank you sir. Do I know you?"

"We met on the road when you were heading for ballet lessons. My sergeant wasn't very pleasant at the time, causing you to be late for your appointment."

"Oh yes, I remember now. Thank you, Captain."

"Well, we must make a move, Helena. Your parents will be wondering what has happened to you." Amon tapped the captain on the shoulder. "Send your wife down for a new dress fitting during the week. No charge, Captain. We are just thankful you could spare the time. No telling what those Arrow Cross swine would have done with Helena if they had caught her."

The captain placed his cap on and took Helena's violin case. "Yes, they're out of control and we don't have the resources to deal with them. They should be locked up, but there are too many of them and we don't have enough prisons to put them in. They pretend to be a political party, so really, as long as they are not murdering anyone in front of us, there's not much we can do.

"Yes, well, I hope better days are coming. This war cannot last much longer, surely?"

The captain ushered Helena toward the door. "I'm afraid, my friend, that it will become much worse before it even begins to look better. I bid you and your fine lady, good evening."

Anna was rocking the baby in his cot, soothing him with a lullaby and wanting him to go to sleep. But he simply kept smiling up at her and making bubbling sounds.

"Darling Nissim, if you don't sleep, we won't sleep. Naughty boy. Oh, that's the front door, now go to sleep my little love."

She moved the curtains aside. A police car . . . perhaps some news of Helena? She made her way to the front door dreading the meeting. With Leo and Miklos still out searching, she felt a huge rise in anxiety. Please don't tell me this is bad news. Please . . . please!



But there was Helena standing there, violin case in hand and a police captain standing beside her. Anna took the case in one hand and hugged Helena with the other. She looked up at the policeman, not waiting for him to speak. “Oh, Captain, thank you . . . thank you so much. Would you come in? Perhaps a cup of tea?”

He had taken off his cap. “Perhaps some other time, Mrs. Weisz. I’m just so happy to have brought your daughter home in one piece. She has quite a story to tell you.”

When Captain Baka had been driven away, Anna closed the front door and took Helena into the kitchen. “You need a very strong cuppa, my love. You look so pale and thin, but you can tell me all about it later. I’ll put the kettle on . . . so, make yourself comfortable in the parlour. Put the radio on to some pleasant music and I’ll join you shortly.” The classical music from Magyar Radio soothed Helena’s nerves and when Anna came into the parlour with a tray carrying two cups and a pot of tea, some milk and sugar, she saw that Helena had fallen asleep in an armchair. Anna sat opposite, placing the tray on an occasional table and pouring for herself, adding a little milk to the brew. She saw a note on the arm of the upholstered chair that Helena was resting in and picked it up, returning to her own chair. What was this? There was no name addressed, but it was all in fine copperplate writing: *“Dear parents of the lovely daughter. We shall not place any names here, just in case this note falls into the wrong hands, but please be relieved that your daughter has come to no harm. She will explain the circumstances so no need for us to inform you further. Now, as the situation is becoming somewhat delicate for people such as yourselves, please be assured that there is a welcome for you and yours here any time, day or night for as long as the danger exists. And yes, that may well be a very long time, but we are happy with that. This building is not always as it is now; it once harboured a fine wine cellar, which today is carefully concealed. No one, except us here, knows of its existence. We’d always thought that if we had children we could make it into a play centre, for surprisingly, it is airy and habitable, but so very much concealed. When the situation becomes too tight for you, which we consider will occur sooner rather than later, you must trust us with your presence.”*

She placed the note down beside the teapot. There was no signature, no way of telling who these people were, so it was all locked up inside the mind of Helena. Was it some kind of trick? No doubt when Helena wakes, it will all be revealed. She heard front door unlocking and she could hear voices. It would be Leo and Miklos returning from their search. Well, no need for them to go out again. The child was safe.

The two men came into the parlour, Leo, noting that Helena was asleep, lowered his voice. “We called in at the Buda police station and they told us that Captain Baka had brought Lena home. So, she is safe. That’s wonderful, but where was she I wonder?”

Anna held out the note. “I think this will explain some, but the rest is locked up inside Lena’s head. So, Leo, we shall just have to sit and wait. Cup of tea for you two, eh?”

The neuro surgeon came into the waiting room of St. John’s hospital in the 12th district of Buda, wearing white trousers and a white jacket. Izsak Sabot thought he looked too young to be a surgeon, let alone even a medical doctor. But Izsak wasn’t aware that Dr. Emmanuel Suri’s identity papers showed that he was forty-three years of age. The rather youthful looking dark-haired surgeon, with half-spectacles hanging off the side of his jacket, urged them to be seated.

“It’s too early to tell. I will need to do some further exploration, but I must tell you up front. He may never walk again. So you must be prepared for that. I have extracted the bullet, but it has done some damage to his spinal column and the nerves accompanying same. So, I’m sorry if you were looking for better news. But, as I say, it’s early days yet. I shall be conferring with my esteemed colleague, the eminent Sir David Vadász. He’s almost into retirement these days, but he and my father were colleagues together in earlier days, so I know him well and will seek his assistance. If you wish to see Benjamin I will arrange for a nurse to show you into his recovery room, but please don’t place any stress upon your son. The last thing he needs is for parents, or anyone else for that matter, to be asking him questions. Just be there for him, no questions, no crying, He doesn’t need that.”

“He’s still asleep, wearing off the effects of the operation. I wouldn’t wake him,” said the young red-haired nurse. “Just be with him, hold his hand if you must, but let him sleep. He will need all of his resources for recovery. He’s in good hands, please be assured of that, so fifteen minutes, no more. I shall return shortly.”

“Oh Ben, Ben, what happened to you?” whispered Bela Sabot. “Who shot you? Who would do such a thing?”

“No questions,” said Izsak, “Remember what the nurse said.”

“Oh tssh, Izsak. He can’t hear me and oh, oh how peaceful he looks lying there, as if nothing ever happened. See, he has some colour in his cheeks.”

“Bela, don’t get your hopes up. It’s probably only the effects of the gas or whatever they used to put him to sleep. We have him alive, so that is more than expected. Alive! Thanks to the Almighty for that! And if I could get my hands on those people who shot him . . . !”



"We can't win against them Izsak. The police thought it could have been the Arrow Cross people, but who would know? These days there are so many people who would see us dead."

"Shsssh! Bela, if our boy can hear you, that's not he wants to listen to. Please don't!"

She cried then, she could not help it. For days it had been sitting there like a dark cloud within her and now it came like a flood, like a tap with heavy pressure behind it, forcing its way into her eyes. She turned away, walking unsteadily toward the door. Izsak followed her. What could he do? Just let it have its way, he thought. Let it have its way. We are not gods, we are flesh and blood.

Budapest, Hungary. Monday 31st January 1944

Leopold placed the giggling Nissim back into his cot. Earlier he'd taken the cot into his workshop and put four wheels onto it so that Anna could have the baby next to her any time she wished. They were standing in the kitchen where Anna was preparing a luncheon of Chicken and Mushroom soup. Her grey eyes were smarting somewhat from the chopped onions.

"Oh, oh, these onions are so strong! You did the shopping on Friday, Leo, where did you get them from?"

"The usual greengrocers, Szabo's. Why?"

"Oh nothing really, just wondering why they make my eyes water so much."

"Perhaps your body's reacting after having the baby! Would you like these mushrooms chopped up?"

"Yes, thanks. You don't seem to be reacting, so perhaps it's just me. By the way, did you read that note from the dress shop people?"

He leant forward and kissed her on the neck. "Yes, they seem to be genuine enough. I might call on them later in the week and thank them for protecting Lena."

Anna took out a handkerchief from her apron pocket and dabbed her eyes. "Yes, that would be a good idea. Do you think we would ever have to use their kind offer?"

Leopold picked up a sharp knife and began slicing the mushrooms. "It may well come to that, dearest . . . yes," he nodded, "It may well be so. In the meantime I'm pulling Helena out of school. As we discussed, from now on we will home-school and I would expect Miklos to help out there as well. If I was a fly on the wall I would be listening to Roza's husband, Markus, complaining that he doesn't have enough police to monitor those Arrow Cross people."

Anna sighed. "Do you think, your sister Roza having turned Roman Catholic, she would be safe enough?"

"Really, Anna, it's only for show . . . for the marriage . . . she may not be any safer than us, and for Markus via association, well, anything could happen. All their worshipping at the cathedral will be for nothing if those Arrow Cross do some digging."

Anna shuddered slightly. "Oh, what a mess we are in, Leo. It's not going to end well, is it?"

He shook his head. "It's still early days. We have time, but you must warn your mother to be ready when the time comes. We will miss dear old Magyar, but I can't see any alternative. I know Horthy has been hedging with Hitler, putting off the inevitable . . . but it will come, Anna . . . it will come. Hitler's patience won't last forever. But almost everyone here has their heads in the sand; they don't think anything drastic will happen. Now, keep this to yourself, I know that Horthy has been making overtures to the British and Americans to get us out of this war. But they are too far away and I doubt if they can be of any help."

Anna began to add the chicken broth to the saucepan, stirring slowly. "And the Sabots? I hear that Benjamin is still in a coma. Do you think he will make it?"

"Actually, his father Izsak said he was out of the coma but sleeping soundly. So, that's a good sign. Now, our Relief and Rescue Committee will be meeting with a Swedish envoy this coming summer. I can't wait to meet him. Together with Oskar Schindler, a considerable amount of good works will be done. Meanwhile, we are still concentrating on preventing much of those refugees being sent to Ukraine. A dreadful business that! The Russians will be there sooner rather than later, and then the killing will start. Russia has no love for Jews."

Berlin, Germany



The psychologist, Ferdinand Altendorf, sighed. Despite his feelings of neutrality as far as patients were concerned, he could not help but wonder if his secretary, Erika Hagens, was right. Was Seigbert Grok a spy, sent by the Gestapo or the SS to check out Altendorf's background? Ferdinand wasn't of Jewish blood, as far as was known, but perhaps somewhere in the distant past? No, he thought, that's not the case. Perhaps they had suspicions about the child, Freida . . . the Jewish child that he and his daughter, Hilda, had been hiding for months since the child's Jewish parents of Flat six had been taken away by the SS? It was a Sunday afternoon and Hilda had been baby-sitting Freida while the parents were out at a Jewish gathering. When they came home, they went to their flat to rest for a while before picking Freida up, but the SS had been waiting for them, having broken into the flat. The doctor was not home at the time and Hilda knew she must not intervene as Freida's parents were brutally shuffled down the stairs. Not only would the five-year-old Freida have been taken away, but Hilda would as well. It was a terrifying time and she hid Freida inside a bedroom cupboard until the SS had gone. Later, a hiding place behind a bookcase would be made where Freida could hide during the day when Hilda and her father were at work. It was a precarious situation that both Hilda and her father knew could not last. The child had to be smuggled to the underground. It did seem to be a coincidence that two days after the Jewish parents had been taken away, Grok had made an appointment with the psychologist. Had one of the parents broken under torture and revealed the presence of the child? It was a puzzle, and what also was a puzzle was why Grok had presented doctor Altendorf with a copy of Hitler's biography *Mein Kampf*, a dissertation of hate against the Jews and other ethnicities?

In spite of the number of appointments he had during the day, he could not fully concentrate on his patients. His mind kept returning to his daughter, Hilda, who had organised a meeting with a section of the underground out beyond Berlin into farming land. She'd set off before dawn with Freida clinging tightly behind her on the bicycle, taking back streets until the signs of the city were far away. A hastily drawn map, pushed under her door during the night, revealed the meeting place in an out-shed on a farmer's property. The country lanes were narrow and often overhung with trees and bushes as she pushed against the cold wind along muddy road surfaces. Twice they had to dismount when the mud was too thick to cycle through, but eventually came across a thin bitumen track. Freida Jakabs had a new identity card: Frederick Altendorf; her curly hair had been cut to within a few millimetres and she was now wearing long grey trousers, a blue shirt with a distinctive rural jacket, and a boy's cap on her head. One of the benefits of living on the fringe of Berlin was that the countryside was close at hand, but even though they had left the city before dawn it was three and a half hours before they reached their destination. They had been stopped only once, at a police road-block where the lieutenant in charge inspected their identity cards. He is taking his time, thought Hilda as she tightened the scarf around her head. The wind was bitterly cold, but the oberleutnant didn't seem to be in any hurry. Hilda thought she had all the answers ready, but could feel her nerves beginning to shake her body. It was Freida who broke the impasse with her comment to the oberleutnant

"That's a lovely shiny badge you have on your cap, sir. Would you have one to spare for me?"

The oberleutnant laughed and the other police beside him joined in. "Well now, little Freddy, that's a very nice comment, but no, I haven't any badges to spare. But when you grow up you might become a policeman like me and then you will have a badge of your own."

He handed the identity cards back to Hilda. "That's a fine looking son you have there ma-am. I'm sure he will go a long way in this world."

"Oh, he's not my son, officer. He's my little brother."

"Whatever. I bid you good-day. Take care now."

Hilda opened the door to the hut. She was instantly grabbed from behind and pushed up against the wall by a tall, dark bearded man about thirty years of age. He pushed a pistol into her right ear. "Password!" Freida, who was standing at the open door, began to tremble.

Hilda struggled against the hold and searched her mind for the code she had been given.

"A . . . British Hurricane . . . ah . . . over grey Munich skies."

"How many?" The pistol felt cold against her ear.

"S . . . S . . . Sixteen!"

The man released her. "Sorry for the rough stuff, but you know how it is these days."



“Yes, I’m Deborah, as requested. The child is Freida Jakabs, now known as Frederick Altendorf for a time. I assume the child will revert to her real name when she is free? As far as we know, her parents are probably no longer alive.”

“Fine. And the money?”

“Oh, of course.” Hilda rummaged through her shoulder bag and withdrew a large brown envelope. The man counted it. “Not as much as we would have expected, Deborah. But every bit helps the cause. He spun her around to face the other three people sitting at a rough hewn table: two men and a woman.

“I’m Fritz and the others are Simon, Justin, and Louisa — not our real names of course. If we all get through this war you may discover who we are, Deborah. You don’t really look like a Deborah.” He laughed. “More like an Irena or Wilhelmina. No doubt we shall discover who you really are after the war, if it ever ends. You’re very brave to be doing this. Now, you cannot stay and we have to move on after dark. We’ll feed the child and you’ve explained to the child what is to happen?”

Hilda took Freida by the hand and squatted down in front of her. “Now, you know you must tell everyone from now on that you are Freddy, don’t you?”

The child nodded, staring at the people around the table.

“So, the sooner you go with these lovely uncles and aunt Louisa, the sooner you will see your mama and papa. And now aunt Hilda has to go, you understand that, don’t you little Freddy?”

The child nodded again without saying anything. Hilda hated herself for telling the lie.

The young woman at the table rose and came over. She took Freida’s hand. “I’m Aunty Louisa, Freddy, and we must go soon on a beautiful journey through the forest where you will see beautiful birds and other animals . . . and bunny rabbits too. Say goodbye now to Aunty Hilda.”

Freida wrapped her arms around Hilda’s legs and it seemed an eternity. She did not want to let go, until Hilda knelt down again and kissed her cheeks.

“Goodbye for now, my lovely one. We’ll see each other again . . . not too long . . . when summer comes . . . and it will be a great holiday for you over the seas in that place they call England. Goodbye my love.”

The psychologist, Doctor Ferdinand Altendorf, tapped the pencil on his oaken desk. It was four o’clock and no word from Hilda. Had the ‘crusade’ gone well or had she and the child been captured by the Nazis? He was not an anxious man, but the thought of losing Hilda and the child unnerved him. Better that he go home and wait with perhaps a stiff whiskey or two. He called out to his secretary, Erika Hagens.

“Yes, Doctor?”

“I’m leaving early, Erika, you may as well also.”

“Not feeling too well, Doctor?”

“No, no . . . it’s just that . . . a few family problems, that’s all.” He reached inside the cupboard for his coat and hat. “Would you lock up, please. I’m in a bit of a hurry.”

“Yes, Doctor. Will you be here in the morning? There are several appointments.”

He patted her on the shoulder. “Of course I’ll be here, that is if the British or the Americans haven’t bombed us out of all creation overnight.”

“Well, just in case, Doctor Ferdinand,” and she leant forward and kissed him on his right cheek.

He smiled. “Well, Erika, that wasn’t all that unexpected. Thank you.”

“Good night Doctor.”

London, England, Saturday 5th February 1944

The black-out didn’t bother the crowd out for a good time in spite of wartime regulations. What did annoy the owner of The Blue Angel nightclub in Soho was that his glittering neon sign had to be shut down. Elisha Molnár had been filling



in for the resident pianist, Hugh Wade, for the past three weeks, but Wade was returning on Monday next and Elisha was wondering where else he could find employment in a crowded wartime London. In one way he was slightly relieved that his time of employment was up, because of the club's obvious connections to the shady life of London. He was sure that his boss, Harry Meadows, wasn't all that circumspect about where he got his supplies; probably from the black market, thought Elisha. But then, what business wasn't doing that these days, especially with American warehouses filling up with all kinds of goods. If you knew someone, who knew someone . . . well, surely the Yanks wouldn't miss a few boxes and cartons here and there?

The crowd was pleasant enough, with high profile entertainment figures who still had some money to flash around, and numerous American army officers with their dates. The food was good with an enviable stock of good wines and other liquors. People danced until well after mid-night with now and then a few British and American banknotes stuffed into Elisha's top coat pocket from those who appreciated his own version of jazz music while the band took a rest. The ex-Budapest opera conductor, once his cold fingers had loosened up, found himself liking the Jazz and Swing music of the London night scene. The radio at home was often tuned to America's airwaves and he and Izabella sometimes danced to the tunes of Glen Miller's rather catching melody band. Despite Germany's bombing raids over London, the nightclubs remained packed, mostly in basement areas with band music drowning out the engine noise of aircraft. What they couldn't drown out were the blasts from the Heinkel, Junkers and Dornier bombers during their night raids and sometimes day raids over Britain's capital city, saving some ammunition for the northern cities of Liverpool Birmingham and Manchester.

Elisha had witnessed a dog-fight one afternoon over the periphery of London in 1943. It was a slightly overcast day. He'd gone to Hampstead to collect a basket-full of vegetables that Jane Carrington of Daffodil Cottage had managed to procure for him and Izabella. Earlier, he'd met a Royal Air Force Squadron Leader at the Blue Angel who told him that the German planes he saw would have mostly been Focke-Wulf 190's, virtually a hit and run fighter-bomber that sometimes made sneaky raids over London in the daytime, apparently in response to some of the Allied night bombing raids over Berlin. The Royal Air Force officer said that the Focke-Wulf 190 based in Western France could easily reach England by flying low just above wave height under the British radar screen, drop their single 500lb bomb and then, if they had time, would search the streets for civilians to gun down with their twin cannons and then — short of ammunition —speedily head back to France. In these Luftwaffe daylight operations the anti-aircraft batteries were caught unawares and slow to react, which was the same with the RAF Spitfires and Hurricanes still on the ground. The dog-fight Elisha witnessed only occurred because a flight of British Spitfires was above the clouds on reconnaissance patrol and had dived into the Focke-Wulf formation with cannons blazing.

Elisha was full of admiration for the Spitfire pilots, watching how graceful they twisted and turned among the German aircraft and then one of the Focke-Wulf's with a Spitfire on its tail caught fire and plunged to the ground, which meant, he considered, the death of its pilot. So it goes on, he thought, on and on this war without an ending. It was high drama he mused, which probably would lead to someone writing an opera about it one day — one day when the war was over, but when would that be? The plane had plunged to the ground in a ball of fire, perhaps only a mile or two from where he was standing. He knew that no one could withstand that crash — the pilot not having time to bail out, would have been burnt alive. He stood for some time, watching the smoke billowing into the sky, merging with the grey clouds. All this killing! They kill, we kill . . . everyone is turned to animalistic killing activities. Would there ever be peace? It seemed that one war ends and another begins. "We are mad!" he murmured, and he thought of Wagner, the German composer. Was he mad also, with his strident militaristic compositions and being an anti-Semite too! Yes, Hitler loves Wagner's music and the Nazis use the heavy, stirring dramatic music to their advantage in newsreels, at festivals, on radio broadcasts and during speeches. Wagner's dark and disturbing music blared out from military propaganda vans that combed Germany's streets day and night. Elisha shuddered. Yes, Wagner the womaniser, the man unfaithful to his wife, the man who considered that Jews could never be culturally accepted. And now he is worshipped!

Izabella enthused over the basket of vegetables. She clapped her hands. "Oh, this is marvellous, but we must share some with others, my love. We can't keep all of this to ourselves!"

"Well, there's your mother and Mrs. Dart . . . half of that cabbage, half of the onions, some of the beet. Ah, I see Jane has hidden some eggs under the vegetables, how about that! You decide what to share and I'll take it over before dark."

"I hope you paid her well?"

"She wouldn't accept the two half crowns I gave her, stuffed one into the basket as I was leaving. It's slipped into the bottom here somewhere."

"Yes, I'm not surprised she did that. She was so good to us during our honeymoon, but how does she do all of this in winter?"



"She has this hothouse down the back yard next to the chicken run. Remember?"

"Oh, of course, what an enterprising lady."

"Well, you know, if I hadn't met you . . . Jane would be such a catch."

"Come here you. Damn, I've made the bed!"

"Well, let's unmake it, shall we?"

"It's rather early."

"So, that never stopped us at Hampstead."

"I cannot resist that gleam in your eye. Would you like to make babies, my darling?"

"I would, now that we are safe here in England . . . well relatively speaking. Let's make hungry little Hungarians, shall we?"

"They'll be hungry little British babies my love . . . British. Hungary is some place so far away in the clouds. It's almost as if it never existed."

Budapest, Hungary

Helena was soaping Nissim's hair as the child giggled and burred in the warmth of the tin bath placed on the kitchen floor. "You'll have to keep still my little darling, else the soap will get in your eyes."

"Dah dah."

Helena laughed. "No, my sweet, I'm not your daddy, not your papa. I'm your sister, you know sis . . . sis."

"Sis, sis!"

"Yes, that's right . . . sis, sis. Oh look at you with your beautiful green eyes . . . hazel I suppose, same as mine . . . runs in the family. Boo! Boo!"

She kissed him on the cheek. "Let's get you rinsed my love. Make you nice and clean for me to take you for a walk in the pram. Your mama and papa are resting, and I must get on with my lessons . . . and prepare some food after the fast. Soon be dark, so the chores will begin. Just play with your little duck while I get some more warm water."

Miklos came down the stairs, patting his hair down and stretching. "Just been listening to the latest short wave news, bit of an earthquake in Turkey, thousands of people dead. Terrible."

"And the war?" queried Helena. "What's the latest?"

Miklos stretched again, then leant down and tickled Nissim's belly." The child looked up at him and laughed.

"Mmm . . . the Russians have taken the town of Gdov, a long way from here I know, but they're pushing the German army back on all fronts. It seems the German Panzer tanks are still holding firm, but I think it's only a matter of time before the Russians with their more agile tanks overcome them. And the Americans have this new fighter plane, called a Mustang, which is causing the Germans much grief. The BBC reckons its a fast climbing, high altitude fighter that's been outpacing the German Messerschmitts and seeing that its a bit of a look-a-like, the German ground batteries have been holding back their fire. What a laugh! The British prime minister, Churchill, is rather amused at all of this."

Ukraine, Sunday 6th February 1944

Deep within the Ukraine forests dawn was breaking, a dull grey dawn that seeped, like the bitter cold, through the cracks in the barn that Sandor Weisz and almost one hundred Hungarian labour force men were tightly grouped. There were no blankets, simply sheaves of straw thrown to the floor upon which sleep came intermittently. The men were weary, attempting to recover from the heavy unloading of ammunition and other goods from the freight train now sitting idly on the rails which were lightly sprinkled with overnight rain.

Most of the men were exhausted from not only the unloading but the previous long march to the train depot, Sandor managing to struggle along, bearing the pain in his leg as much as he could. Then the long train journey in cattle cars culminating in the stop at the small village. The unloading had been merciless, with many of the uniformed Hungarian guards using whips to hurry the labour force.

There had been a growling murmur from some of the men, who talked of escape . . . there would be an overthrowing of the guards, an idea which spread like wildfire among the exhausted labour force. The plan snaked its way among the men, passing from one to the next until almost all were in agreement. The train whistle that would soon blow; would signal that the men were required to return to the cattle cars and the train would then continue on its way to an unknown destination, which some thought would be the front line. The word was out that when they had finished digging the required ditches at the front line for the army, they would be of no further use to the authorities, and being mostly Jews, would be shot and buried in mass graves. They couldn't let that happen. When the lieutenant came and unlocked the barn door after the whistle had blown, the men would carry out their scheme. They would sit for a while,



refusing to move, and when the Lieutenant called for support from soldiers who had slept in comfort during the night and somewhat disorientated from being woken up from their dreams at dawn, they would rush as one body and take control — take the locomotive driver and his associate as prisoners, forcing them to return the train to Hungarian ground.

Within seconds the train whistle gave one sharp sound and the men tensed. They heard the unlocking of the barn door as the lieutenant stood there with his whip and holstered side-arm. “Mindenki . . . Mindenki! Everyone out!”

Silence.

“Get your arses out of there!” screamed the lieutenant. “Now!”

Silence.

‘The lieutenant pulled the Frommer 37M pistol from his holster and fired a shot into the crowd. “Now move!”

What he was expecting was a slow, sullen, standing of the men as they gradually made their way to the door, but what he got instead was this sudden rush as the men stood up and headed toward him howling numerous obscenities and clawing the air with their arms. The lieutenant stepped back in shock and as if by a previously given order, two soldiers appeared by his side. They grabbed the barn door and slammed it shut and the crowd could hear the large padlock snapping into place as they reached the door, hammering on it and shouting out loud.

The shouting continued and became a chant, “Hungarians will be free . . . Hungarians will be free!”

The lieutenant turned to the two guards. “Get the gasoline! You know what to do!”

The door of the barn was bending with the onslaught of the men behind it. The guards returned with canisters of petrol and began pouring it around the cracked and weak exterior boards.

“Hurry up!” called the lieutenant. “Fire it! Move! Don’t take all day.”

One of the guards had lit a fuse of twisted newspaper and began to run around the perimeter of the barn, touching here and there as the fuel ignited immediately and savagely began to climb. Smoke was beginning to pour through the cracks and into the interior of the barn where men soon began to cough and wheeze. The lieutenant turned and began to walk away. He had to write up in his journal how one of the Jewish labourers had stolen a cigarette lighter and some gasoline and set the straw alight. He wrote that as he had no means of containing the fire, except for some useless buckets of water, he was grieved and saddened at what had occurred at the hands of a Jewish monster who had been hiding inside one of the cattle cars under some bags. The Jew had set fire to the barn and while attempting to escape was shot and his body searched. He was found to have the cigarette lighter on him, while his boots smelt of spilt gasoline. Thus, irrefutable evidence that he had started the fire for some unknown revenge. The lieutenant knew that his report would be lightly perused at headquarters, stamped CLOSED, and then simply filed away.

Schöneberg Berlin, Germany

SS-Obersturmführer, 1st Lieutenant SS Wolfgang Gehring, came out of the neo-gothic St. Paul the Apostle Church, lingering back as the crowd hurriedly dispersed. He was tired and thought he would sit for a while on one of the garden seats. It was a cold, slightly overcast day, and he pulled the collar of his grey gabardine overcoat closer to his neck. He was here in Berlin due to the wound in his left hip that was slow in healing, away from duty on medical grounds. He sat the pearl-handled walking stick beside him, thinking how long he might have to be burdened with the use of it.

He glanced up at the spire of the church, wondering how St. Paul’s had survived the intense enemy bombing of November last year — one of the very few churches without damage, well . . . so far at least. The minister had preached on holiness, but there was nothing holy about this war that seemed never to cease . . . the text being Leviticus XIX 1-2, when the Lord spoke to Moses telling him to “Speak unto the congregation of the children of Israel, and say unto them ‘Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God *am* holy.’ ”

A sudden gust of wind blew at him . . . cold . . . icy fingers penetrating through the pores of his skin — he’d left his gloves at the flat — it was much like all that was around him these days . . . so cold and cruel. This madness could not go on. The things he and his fellow officers had done in direct opposition to holiness, this had been concerning him for some time and now with this. He had even written to his uncle, a professor of theology and ethics at Humboldt University on Unter den Linden boulevard, who had hardened his heart against the enemies and had concluded that the rise of the Third Reich was God’s will.

How could this be? In his letter Wolfgang had written: “*Have you no heart? The day will come when all of us will have to pay for what we have done and what we have thought. You, supposedly a man of God, how can you excuse*



the path you have gone down? There will be consequences; can none of us see that? Why are we so blind, indeed, why are we the way we are . . . we have become animals . . . but even that is a lie my dear uncle, because no animal would act or do what we have done, and in the name of? Of what? Some wild vision of a pure race of people ruling the world? We are not pure, indeed we are far from that ideal. We think of ourselves as the highest, but dear uncle, we are indelibly the lowest. We build these fine cathedrals and then we destroy them. Where is the sense in that?"

But he had left the letter unfinished, unsigned, pushed between the pages of *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque, and left the book at the rear of a bookshelf where no doubt it would be found one day by someone winding up his life and distributing his meagre possessions. His fingers, within the pocket of the thick overcoat, felt the holster within where the Walther P38 pistol rested on his belt. It's not yet time for that. There were things to be done.

The minister, Pfarrer Eitel-Friedrich von Rabenau, came scurrying down the path, his robes replaced by a thick black overcoat and hat.

"Ah, Officer Gehring! Don't you have a home to go to? Anyway, mind if I sit with you for a moment . . . I noticed that you appeared to be rather concerned during the service." It was an assertion rather than a question. Wolfgang looked up, shrugged his shoulders and forced a smile. "I was thinking about your text Leviticus XIX. It goes against everything that we know about mankind . . . or rather, everything about this particular time in history."

The minister sat, pulling his hat down against the cold wind. "It will all come to an end, and people will try to be holy again. The difficulty is in attempting to follow God's word in a time of war . . . a time of slaughter, vindictiveness, hate, cruelty. Have you been cruel Herr Gehring . . . eh, Wolfgang? Is it your job to be cruel to God's creatures, these myriads of struggling human beings?"

The SS officer leant forward, took a deep breath, then leaned back again. He looked at the minister. "I have come to a crossroads, Herr von Rabenau, I can no longer believe in this grand melodramatic soap opera, the so-called majestic Third Reich. It is wrong, but we have lied to ourselves that it is the most magnificent of all things. Our Leader believes that it is a heaven on earth, while all the while we kill and maim, in the name of . . . what?"

"Ah, it is the weakness of humanity, my son, to follow that which pretends to be a heaven on earth. Doctrines come, doctrines go, but the will of the Lord endures evermore. I see that you are much troubled . . . it doesn't take much to see that pain in your eyes . . . it is a dangerous pain too, Wolfgang, a very dangerous pain indeed, because you may be tempted to do something that you may very well regret. Ecclesiastes 3: 'There is a time for everything under the sun . . . a time to tear down and a time to build.' Your time to tear down has passed, it is now your time to build. Is that not so, my friend? I feel this so strongly with you."

Wolfgang looked into the bright eyes of the minister. "Pastor, I have seen the bodies of hundreds, hundreds of innocent people going to rot on burial mounds so quickly to be covered from sight. That's what we do, cover everything that we don't like or don't want from sight, until in our minds what it simply never existed. And that is our Fuhrer's belief and command."

"Yes, you are indeed in need of help. Perhaps I may be of some assistance? You would remember my brother, General Freidrich von Rabenau, no?"

"Um . . . Oh yes, he was an artillery commander, wasn't he? What happened to him — he seems to have disappeared?"

The pastor ran his tongue across his upper lip. "Yes, he is no longer in command; he displeased the Fuhrer and is now in enforced retirement. But in this so-called retirement he has completed a degree in protestant theology, I think with view to becoming a military chaplain."

"So, he would no longer be a member of our Nazi party?"

"He never was. That is part of his shall we say, problem. He opposes the party!"

"As you do, I gather?"

"Well, let's just say I disagree with what it stands for. I cannot condone it because of my Christian beliefs. My standard is Christ, and only Christ. That's all that matters to me."

"But there are churches that support the Reich. I've seen many churches here in Berlin with the Swastika symbol planted firmly outside. What do you make of that?"

"Well, they are what we call *Deutsche Christen* — they are not evangelical, and they are not free. They are traitors to our Lord and Saviour."

"There are hundreds of them, pastor, how . . ."

"The Fuhrer made an edict back in . . . what was it now . . . 1933, yes . . . yes . . . we did not adhere to it. I myself was suspended for a year. Did you know that?"

"I see. So, with your brother and no doubt numerous others, you are disobeying the Reich command!"



The pastor adjusted his finely-rimmed spectacles and lightly brushed his very slim moustache. "If you say so. No doubt you are in a position to have us investigated by the Gestapo, but you won't do that because of your own beliefs. Am I correct?"

Wolfgang was again aware of the pistol at his side. He sighed. He could shoot the pastor there and then and there would be no questions asked. Simply place the pistol onto the pastor's forehead and squeeze the trigger. He was bringing the justice of the Reich to bear against a man who was a traitor to his own country. . . or was he? The silence between them seemed an eternity. He was aware of some of the bomb-damaged buildings around them with the church one of the few in Berlin that had been spared. Perhaps this was a sign? He turned to the pastor: "What can I do to help?"

Eidel von Rabenau clapped him on the shoulder and handed him a card with an address embossed on it. "Come to the parsonage tonight — 8.00 o'clock sharp. Ah, minus the uniform."

Monday 7th February 1944

ReichFührer Heinrich Himmler's SS and Gestapo headquarters Berlin.

Himmler's secretary, Gerda Schmidt, could see that the ReichFührer was annoyed. She knew that it didn't take much to set him off as he banged the telephone receiver down on the desk, causing her to feel a little edgy. She huddled down onto her typewriter because she knew that he would take out his anger on other people around him, though this morning for once, she seemed invisible to him. He was muttering to himself as he sifted through a pile of papers on his desk. Now he was writing something on a memo pad with heavy underlining of certain words. How small could she become? Perhaps it was best to take a trip to the lavatory, to be out of his hair for a while? She felt a tickle in her throat and could not help but utter a small cough. Himmler looked up and stared at her.

"You shouldn't be bringing your germs to work, Gerda. They spread, you know! Why don't you go into the ladies and freshen yourself up, eh?"

Gerda nodded, stood up and pushed her chair away. It seemed to her that he had this uncanny knack of reading her mind. It happened often, too many times just to be a coincidence. She was going to acknowledge him, but he was already head down, scribbling away at the memo pad. His thoughts were elsewhere. The Leader had been at him to increase the imprisonment and speed up the Final Solution, as if he wasn't already doing just that! Hitler had ranted on the phone, repeating and barking out one of his favourite sayings: "The Jews must be punished for their crimes against the European nations and in general against the entire cultural world. I want this program speeded up!"

As if I'm not already doing just that, thought Himmler. It's not only the SS I have made determined to carry out these movements on our behalf, it is also the complete Wehrmacht that has officially been told to act against the Jews wherever they go. So far, my designs have been foolproof, but there is always room for improvement and all the commanders must be made to see that. Wherever there is slackness, wherever there is hesitation, these factors have to be ruled out because it is in the national interest that the Jews are totally gone from Europe.

The Leader had said to him "What are you doing about Hungary? There are over one million Jews now living there." What am I doing about Hungary, eh? The man wants miracles; very well, I shall show him a miracle come March. Yes, indeed, why do these smart-ass Jews think they can still carry out their insidious ways in Hungary and get away with it? And all this recent bombing of Berlin by the enemy, it is the Jews who are behind this, no doubt thinking that they can come back and resume their thieving, enriching ways. March it is and March it shall be.

Gerda had returned to her desk. She glanced at Himmler; he seemed to have settled down, was even humming a tune. "Deutschland, meine geliebte Heimat": Germany My Beloved Homeland.

He stood up, tore several pages from his large memo pad and walked across to Gerda. "Now, I want these to go out to all the Waffen and SS field commanders, Gerda. Type them up and give them to SS-Untersturmführer Bauer in communications to send out. Hmmm, you are looking a little pale, Gerda. A small brandy might help."

He walked across to the walled-in liquor cabinet which he rarely used, taking a small glass and filling it with one shot of brandy. He returned to Gerda's desk and placed the glass in front of her. "This will warm you up . . . heh heh . . . as if you're not warm already!" His fingers trailed across her shoulder and her neck, and even though she tried not to flinch, she did. He removed his hand. Early days, he thought, early days. You'll come around my little beauty.

His telephone rang again. "Excuse me, Gerda. That's probably our Leader again." But it wasn't. The voice was distant; the line was crackling somewhat and was fading in and out as the person struggled to be heard.

"Speak up! Speak up! Ah, Heinz! So, what have you got for me?"

Himmler listened, pushing the receiver firmly against his ear as if the force of his pressing would clear the air. "Yes, yes, I hear you. What . . . ?"

The line kept wavering. "Horthy did what . . . ? Speak up, man, speak up!" The conversation went on for several minutes while Himmler made notes on his memo pad. Eventually, he placed the receiver into its cradle and turned to



Gerda. "That was my man in Budapest. It seems that Regent Horthy has rejected our demands and has refused to see our delegation. Well, we'll see about that. Greta, have my car brought around; I must meet with our beloved Leader."

The Ukraine forest

They had been sleeping at the rear of the barn, half hidden by a row of stables when the outburst began and the fire quickly spread with smoke choking the men — eleven of them including Sandor Weisz and Alex Ungar. As the smoke began to overcome them Alex took charge and shouted: "Out the back, c'mon, out the back. I noticed some of the slats out the back are broken." He suddenly wheezed and bent over, trying to escape the smoke that was beginning to penetrate their lungs. "Come on . . . we'll k . . . kick our way out! The smoke will give us cover!"

The small group of men rushed behind him, heading for a corner of the barn where some of the palings had broken away and others with rotting edges were looking weak. Everyone began to kick at the wall which shuddered at their onslaught.

Alex yelled. "Just there! Look, some have broken away. C'mon, concentrate on that. Keep it up!"

The smoke billowed up behind them, obscuring them from the main body of the barn — eleven men desperately kicking and pushing at the slats until suddenly they gave way and there was a hole big enough for them to scramble through. Most of them were coughing and wheezing, struggling for air as they tumbled out onto the grass.

"Follow me!" Called Alex, as he ran for the trees. The men raced behind him, one tripping on the rough surface, then being pulled up by several who followed, forcing him to stagger to his feet. "Let's go!" shouted Sandor, now running as fast as he could and trying to ignore the pain in his leg. He was away! He was free!

They had almost reached the trees and the heavy undergrowth when the shots rang out. Two men fell. "Keep going, keep going!" called Alex, "Almost there! Keep going!" A blinding searchlight flashed out behind them illuminating the small body of men as they raced down a slope so close to the trees. More rifle shots rang out from behind them, cutting down three more men.

Then suddenly the six men were through, into the inky darkness enveloped by bushes and trees. Alex grabbed Sandor by the arm and pulled him on, fearing that the young man would be left behind. "I'm not losing you, San . . . not losing you. C'mon, stay with me!"

As dawn began to break the men realised that no one was following them. They had found a small creek in the wilderness and ruminated that where there was water, there eventually would be civilisation, perhaps a small village of peasants who might help them with food and directions. They were going back to Hungary . . . going home . . . and they would raise so much hell when they got there that the authorities just wouldn't dare to send them back. The whole of Budapest would know about the conditions they had escaped from. Well, that was the idea, thought Sandor, but would it work?

To be continued.

RMIT University's study of women's feet reveals 60/70% wearing the wrong size. Aeden Ratcliffe, writing in RMIT News states: "The study of 107 women found 72% wore a different size under US sizing and 65% under EU sizing. More participants wore a larger size than their foot length indicated – 59% under US sizing and 52% under EU sizing.

The researchers say this tendency to size up suggests some women may be compensating for shoes that do not adequately accommodate their foot width, rather than simply choosing the wrong size."

Check out the article on <https://www.rmit.edu.au/news/all-news/2026/aug/shoe-size>

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

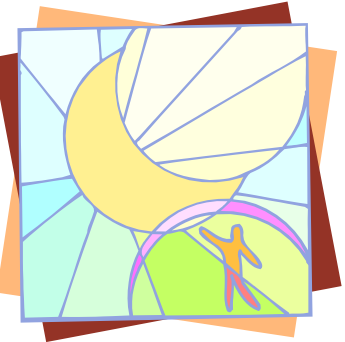


The Quiet Corner

Leaping forward or leaping backwards?

Was the industrial revolution the beginning of our demise as humans? Balance? Where was the balance as we lost sight of the mindful and the spiritual?

What is time? We think we know, but do we really? Scientists will give us several versions of what time means to them, but to us who are speeding along life's highway? We create: poetry, art, prose, because life moves swiftly past us, beyond us, slipping away from our grasp. We create to freeze time for a moment, to capture the essence of its being. This is when time, indeed, does stand still.



Mark Nepo, writing in his book *Drinking from the River of Light*, speaks of the human condition: “The fundamental truth of being human is that we are incredibly sensitive creatures whose joy and pain are registered through that unique sensitivity. This sensitivity allows us the gift of seeing and perceiving. This sensitivity allows us to make sense of being alive. Unlike any other form of life, being human allows us to fit things together or to break things apart.

Inhabiting the art of expressing ourselves is what lets us fit things together rather than break things apart. The art of expressing ourselves — what we experience, what we feel, what we think, and what we imagine exists within us and beyond us — is a form of inner breathing. And so, we each must learn how to do this or we will cease to exist. If you stop breathing you will die. If you stop expressing, you may walk around and buy groceries and pay the bills, but you will not be alive.

This lifelong process of weaving what enters us with what rises within us is the necessary art by which we lift the veils between us and keep the world together. As life marks us up, we keep playing the chord in our heart, which echoes the inner truth. We discover, one experience at a time, that a life lived well is well expressed. When most vibrant and vulnerable, we live as a tuning fork, releasing the one conversation that never ends — the conversation of listening, expressing, and creating life.”

Con Clusion



the week that was



Woah! Woah, slow down. We might be living in exciting or bewildering times, but that's no reason to rush. In fact, rushing turns out to be not so good for our health. So, who was rushing around making news this past week. Well, the Houthies for a start, that band of Iran-backed Yemeni rebels (terrorists if you like), doing some damage to Saudi Arabia. Arabian countries not only fight with Israel, but now and then they like to fight among themselves. Been doing it for centuries. What's new?

It's rather interesting about Yemen. Way back after World War I, the town of Hamtramck in the state of Michigan, USA, received a multitude of immigrants of German and Polish ancestry and as the town grew there were mostly Polish shops and Polish churches, but by the end of the 20th Century the population had changed with the majority being immigrants from Middle Eastern and South Asian countries. Fast forward to today and the Poles and Germans are mostly gone. The town since 2015 is now run by a Muslim majority: Yemini, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi, with the Lord Mayor a male and all the councilors male. The last female councilor, Karen Majewski, who was mayor for 16 years until voted out of office, has stated that immigration isn't the problem, but what does seem to be the problem is the all-male oversight of the town. The councilors state that they are there for everybody, male and female, but . . . ?

Misogyny is alive and not so well. The case of the AFL Sydney Swans sex scandal has highlighted the poor attitude of numerous young men toward women. Footballers, and others, who are given an almost Hollywood elevation because of their sporting status, seem to think they are a law unto themselves, and young male teenagers watch their so-called heroes and wish to emulate them. 'If they can do it, so can we,' seems to be the attitude of certain teenagers assaulting young women, even on school premises. Shame. Shame. Shame.