

THE AUSTRALIAN

MONDAY DECEMBER 8 1986

Caution needed over war criminals

MR Andrew Menzies has recommended that the Federal Government take appropriate action under the law to bring to justice people found in Australia who have committed serious war crimes. He has also recommended that allegations of war crimes against 70 people living in Australia be pursued, and to that effect Mr Menzies has passed to the Government a list of these people and their probable whereabouts. Mr Menzies' report correctly stresses that being on that list does not necessarily mean that a person is guilty.

The Government should follow Mr Menzies' broad recommendation to pursue war criminals who may be living in Australia. The Nazi era remains one of the most profoundly offensive systematic transgressions of human rights in our blighted century and if there are individuals who can be identified who were guilty of war crimes they should be brought to justice.

However, the Government should proceed with caution and prudence. There are many dangers inherent in the none the less necessary operation it will have to carry out.

Government spokesmen have been at pains to assure Eastern European ethnic communities that there will be no witchhunt, that there will be no ethnic slanders in which responsibility for the crimes of individuals will be extended to whole ethnic communities and that anyone accused of a crime will receive the full protection of the law and will be prosecuted in accordance with proper legal standards.

Mr Menzies' recommendation that the War Crimes Act be amended so that anyone to be prosecuted could be dealt with by normal, civilian Australian courts, rather than by a military court, is a sensible suggestion.

It is important for all Australians to realise as this matter develops that the hideousness of the crimes of which some people may be accused does not diminish the standard of truth required to establish the facts. Until a person is convicted on the evidence there must be a presumption of innocence.

Mr Menzies canvassed the idea that Australia might amend its legislation covering extradition procedures so that accused people might be tried in the countries where their crimes allegedly took place. The Government should not do this. Many Nazi war crimes took place in the countries of Eastern Europe, which are now under Soviet domination. These countries do not have credible, independent legal systems.

The Government must also guard the secrecy of the names on the list Mr Menzies has given it. This matter is much too important to be mishandled and the danger of perpetrating a new injustice in pursuit of an old one is serious.

Politicians on both sides of the spectrum should refrain from seeking to make tawdry political gain out of the war criminals' issue.

It is reassuring that Mr Menzies has cleared ASIO of any complicity in allowing war criminals to enter Australia, and he says there is no evidence of previous Australian governments acting to assist war criminals in any way. These are important findings that should help to lay to rest a recent batch of conspiracy theories.

Mr Menzies has produced an important report the Government should act on carefully, sensitively, and with a respect for the rights of all people now living in Australia.

Arms deal damage

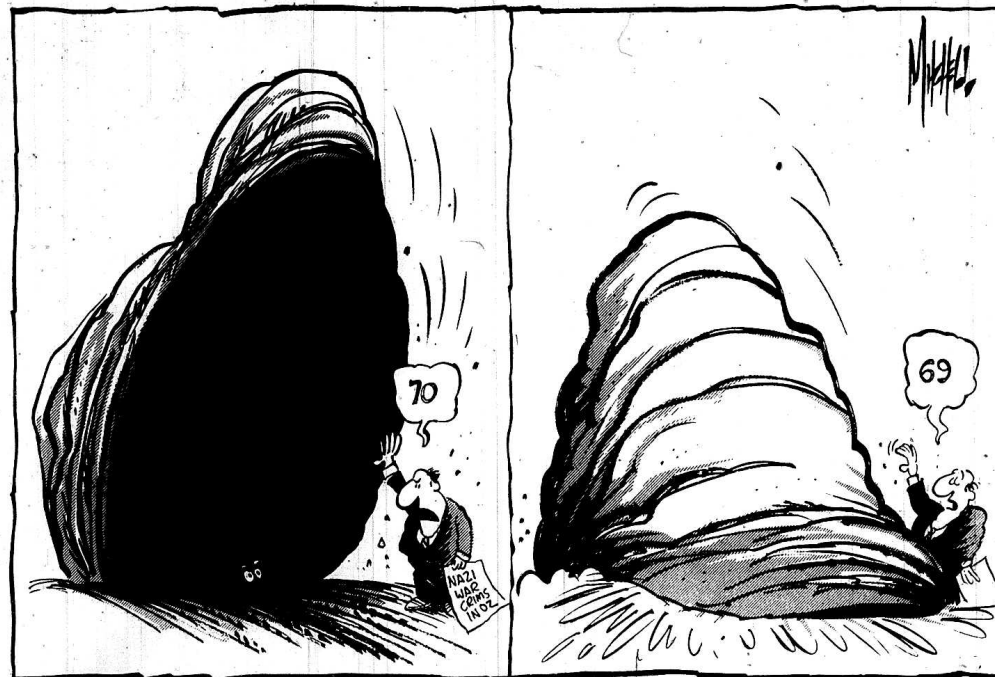
THE continuing internal crisis in the United States over the Iran arms affair is likely to have a detrimental impact on America's foreign relations, especially with friendly Arab States such as Egypt despite the best efforts at de-escalation by President Reagan and the Vice-President, Mr George Bush.

Relations between Egypt and the US have been strained since November last year when American jets staged the mid-air interception of the aircraft carrying the Achille Lauro hijackers from Cairo to Tunis - a trip on which President Mubarak had promised them

no doubt made life increasingly difficult for Mr Mubarak.

When he met with Jordan's King Hussein in Cairo late last month, Mr Mubarak expressed astonishment at the Iran affair. The US, he warned, was in danger of losing the trust of its allies in the Arab world.

The revelations in the US since then will have done little to change this view. Despite Mr Reagan's best efforts at distancing himself from any role in the ultimate destination of the Iran arms deal profits, he has never denied his role in the secret arms deal with Iran



Letters

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Little by little...

I ONCE heard a story about a prison inmate who had his tonsils out the first week he was in prison. He had his appendix out the second week. The third week he had his spleen removed. The prison authorities transferred him to the maximum security section. They were afraid the prisoner was escaping bit by bit.

So it is with Australia. Our socialist friends have failed to convince the people to vote for communist world government. They have developed a new strategy. They are transferring control of our country to the Marxists bit by bit through World Heritage legislation, international labour agreements, etc.

Neither Whitlam, Hawke nor Fraser were ever given a mandate to permit overseas and highly suspect groups to gain control of our parks, mining, employment and other internal affairs. Stop them while we still have some semblance of an orderly nation.

A. R. PITT
Maryborough, Qld

To be or not to be a mother

SIR - I read with great interest the article in *Australian Women* (26/11). A Modern Option - Childless By Choice and Sonia Humphrey's reply (27/11). I am a 31-year-old woman who from as long ago as I can remember has never wanted children.

I have no feelings of guilt about admitting that I do not actually like children. I am quite prepared to nurse babies until they start wailing and then I am more than prepared to hand them back to their parents.

Children up to the age of 15 make me feel uncomfortable. I never know what to say to them. From 15 onwards they seem to be able to hold a reasonably intelligent conversation and I feel much more at ease with them.

I don't feel that my life has narrowed as I have aged, as Sonia Humphrey suggests. In recent years I have completed adult courses at our TAFE college, which I feel have broadened my outlook.

I enjoy the lifestyle I lead being childless. It certainly gives me much more independence and freedom. I'm sure that part of the reason for not wanting children is selfishness

on my part. I have grown very used to doing what I want to do when I want to do it.

Please continue to publish such interesting articles. They are extremely thought-provoking.

JEAN LIDGERWOOD
Gladstone, Qld

I TAUGHT in a secondary school for 13 years before becoming a rather reluctant mother at 35, a feeling nurtured by the fact that I was very aware of all that's amiss in the world and my genuine concern for the future.

Now I am happy to tell that the arrival of that child was the most wonderful thing that could have happened to me.

I chose to be a stay-at-home mother - which is quite a luxury when one considers lost income - but I have found this role to be most rewarding.

The love one has for one's own child and the reciprocal feedback is for me an incredible experience. It's true that we cry more and laugh more; the full range of emotions are more sharply experienced.

I've watched over a sick child thinking my heart could break and I also shed tears of joy. Congratulations to Sonia

Humphrey for a well-written article, the sentiments with which I concur. She has said it all.

JENNY HOLLAND-BATT
Sorrento, Qld

I USED to envy those childless couples when I was struggling with five to get on buses with a pusher and the shopping. Not now. I look at those same childless couples growing old on their own and thank God we never decided that we preferred to have a life full of this world's goods instead.

We do have that now, much later than they, but we have something infinitely better - a terrific family: a group of mature young adults that provide the stimulation we wouldn't get from a group of our own age.

To anyone contemplating the choice I'd say, "Children, by choice!"

MARION MARCHANT
Somerville, Vic

NO kids? No way. Heck, the trophy cabinet and the bookshelf would be empty and lily. Besides, our china plates would all match.

(Mrs) WENDY TRELOAR
Cummins, SA

In brief

AT the risk of upsetting Yolande Bernard by ending a sentence with a preposition, may I say it appears that our Treasurer, "Mr PK", is always getting things summed up. - FRANK BELLET, Gladstone, Qld.

HEADLINE in *The Weekend Australian* (29/11) reads, "Credibility Of Keating Badly Dentied". What credibility? - ERIC G. BAILEY, Ringwood, Vic.

RE the tax return confusion, I suggest that Keating and Blewett should exchange names. - K. R. WILLIAMSON, Tweed Heads, NSW.

FOLLOWING the revelations of our worthy Treasurer's personal taxation management, I will experience no qualms because of my late taxation declarations until I am assured that he has been meted the full penalty he surely deserves. - LOU KEE, Port Macquarie, NSW.

THANKS, Mitchell (1/12) Just what I wanted to say! - J. R. HORNER, Dickson, ACT.

IT would seem more appropriate for vehicle number plates in the premier State to read "State of Corruption". - BILL SHERRIFF, Niddrie, Vic.

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