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Costello tells firebrand clerics to get out of Australia

Samantha Maiden

PETER Costello is urging radical Muslim clerics to leave Australia if they do not share the nation's values ahead of today's national terrorism summit organised by the Prime Minister.

As Muslim leaders gather in Canberra to discuss the spread of Islamic fundamentalism, the Treasurer has warned Australia cannot afford to be ambivalent about the teachings of extremists.

John Howard has urged Islamic leaders to take a greater role in rejecting violence but he has been more restrained than the Treasurer.

"If you don't like those values, then don't come here. Australia is not for you," Mr Costello said yesterday. "This is the way I look at it: Australia is a secular society, with parliamentary law, part of the Western tradition of individual rights."

In an interview with *The Australian*, Mr Costello said migrants needed to understand and respect the "core values" of democracy, a secular society and the equality of women. And he warned that Australia needed to be clear that the nation's core values would not change.

"If you are looking for a country that practises theocracy, sharia law — which is anti-Western — there are those countries in the world . . . you will be happy there. But you won't be happy in Australia."

But he stopped short of supporting the deportation of radical Muslim leaders, in the wake of similar debates in Britain and France.

Today's meeting is, however, expected to discuss plans to offer home-grown courses for Muslim religious leaders at Australia's universities in an attempt to tackle the rise of radical clerics.

Mr Howard said he would be reminding the Islamic leaders that "our common values as Australians transcend any other allegiances or commitments".

He said Muslim leaders had a "particular responsibility" to make clear that Islam totally rejected violence and terrorism and that he wanted them to take ownership of the process of dealing with extremists' views.

"The purpose of this meeting is to underline to the leadership of the Muslim community that it has responsibilities," Mr Howard said.

He refused to budge on suggestions he should include extremists in the summit. "It would undermine the good work of the leaders of 99 per cent of the Muslim community in Australia who are trying to do the right thing, are trying to work with their fellow Australians and don't want prominence given to extremists."

Kim Beazley and Labor foreign affairs spokesman Kevin Rudd said it was important to speak as widely as possible but said the Government would be receiving sensible advice on who should be included.

"I want to see the determination that we're going to uphold respect for Australian values — Australian values of tolerance, Australian values of ensuring that we respect another person's rights, both in religious terms and their own dignity — and to make sure that this notion of respect is included in the curriculum of all schools," Mr Beazley said.

Mr Costello also threw his support behind Australia maintaining a strong skilled migration policy. "Immigration overall helps our country in a security sense and an economic sense. I think there is an acceptance of immigration, more so than 10 years ago. I would like to see a strong immigration policy. I am not putting numbers on it."

Earlier this month, the Treasurer said the notion that terrorists secured a reward in the afterlife for waging jihad against Westerners was "repulsive".

Yesterday he said: "I have seen people that say they believe in sharia law and theocracy. If that's their view, don't come to this country. This one is not for you. I don't think we can afford to be ambivalent about this point to young people or anyone else."

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer compared fundamentalist Muslims to Nazis as he defended the decision not to invite radical clerics to the summit.

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Troubled start to Islamic meeting

JOHN Howard's meeting of Islamic leaders will start in controversy, amid evidence that one of the invitees believes September 11 was a conspiracy.

Abdul (Ray) Rahman Deen asks in a letter "why did 4000 Jews not show up for work" on the day of the attacks, in which thousands died when hijacked planes were flown into New York's World Trade Centre.

And he says there were no black box flight recorders found in the wreckage, suggesting it was therefore wrong to blame any group for September 11 "without full facts and evidence".

Full report — Page 6

Bribery charges hit force

Padraic Murphy

THE "underworld consultant" handpicked by Victorian police chief Christine Nixon to help fight burgeoning gang crime has been charged with serious corruption offences.

In a major embarrassment to Ms Nixon, former commonwealth police officer and barrister Kerry Milte was charged on Friday with offences linked to the alleged bribery of police officers for sensitive information.

In what was described as a "serious error of judgment" by senior corruption investigators, Ms Nixon, who had little experience as a frontline crime-fighter when she was promoted, recruited Mr Milte to work with a top-secret police unit to infiltrate major crime groups just before the escalation of Melbourne's bloody gangland war.

The audacious plan — codenamed Operation Clarendon — fell apart shortly after as the state's crimelords launched an all-out war that ultimately claimed 27 lives.

Ms Nixon has come under sustained pressure to tackle corruption in the force since she became Chief Commissioner almost five years ago, culminating in the Bracks Government setting up a much-maligned watchdog, the Office of Police Integrity.

Despite widespread calls for a powerful independent standing royal commission into official corruption, including from its own Police Minister, the Government opted instead to boost the powers of the Ombudsman to investigate police.

Under immense public pressure, the Office of Police Integrity recruited legendary Queensland crime judge Tony Fitzgerald to conduct its first high-profile inquiry earlier this year — an extremely limited investigation into how police documents were passed to underworld figures.

Although Mr Milte was recruited by Ms Nixon, *The Australian* understands the OPI is now also investigating him and his relationship with several police officers.

It is the second time Ms Nixon has been forced to defend herself in the past fortnight, after the Supreme Court overturned her decision to dismiss two officers accused of serious corruption offences.

Mr Milte has a long history in Australian law enforcement and once acted for underworld identity Mick Gatto. He also led then federal attorney-general Lionel Murphy's infamous raid on ASIO's Melbourne office in 1973.

In 2002, Mr Milte was recruited to work with Operation Clarendon after he was introduced to Ms Nixon by former NSW police assistant commissioner Paul McKinnon. Ms Nixon was a high-ranking NSW officer before moving to Victoria.

Operation Clarendon was so top-secret it was officially passed off as a review of regional crime. It was run by Commander Rod Lambert and Senior Sergeant Wayne Strawhorn, who is now facing trial on unrelated corruption offences.

Mr Milte was instructed to recruit criminal identities as informers that would help police solve the city's brutal gangland murders, a plan that was put into place well before the Purana taskforce was established in 2003.

Those to be targeted included a man close to the crime patriarch Lewis Moran, a senior Italian crime figure, and a close associate of accused killer Carl Williams.

Mr Milte yesterday denied bribing police and said he had been charged because internal affairs investigators had not been informed of the "full story". He said Clarendon would have gone a long way towards solving organised crime and gangland-related killings.

"I will tell you this. The only way I would work with Victoria Police is through Christine Nixon. There is so many problems down there that she is one of the few that I could consider straight," Mr Milte said.

But Clarendon was shut down following pressure from internal affairs officers, who were concerned that several police on the unit were corrupt.

Corruption investigators also became concerned about Mr Milte and access he had gained to police in sensitive areas through his role at Operation Clarendon.

Mr Milte yesterday confirmed he

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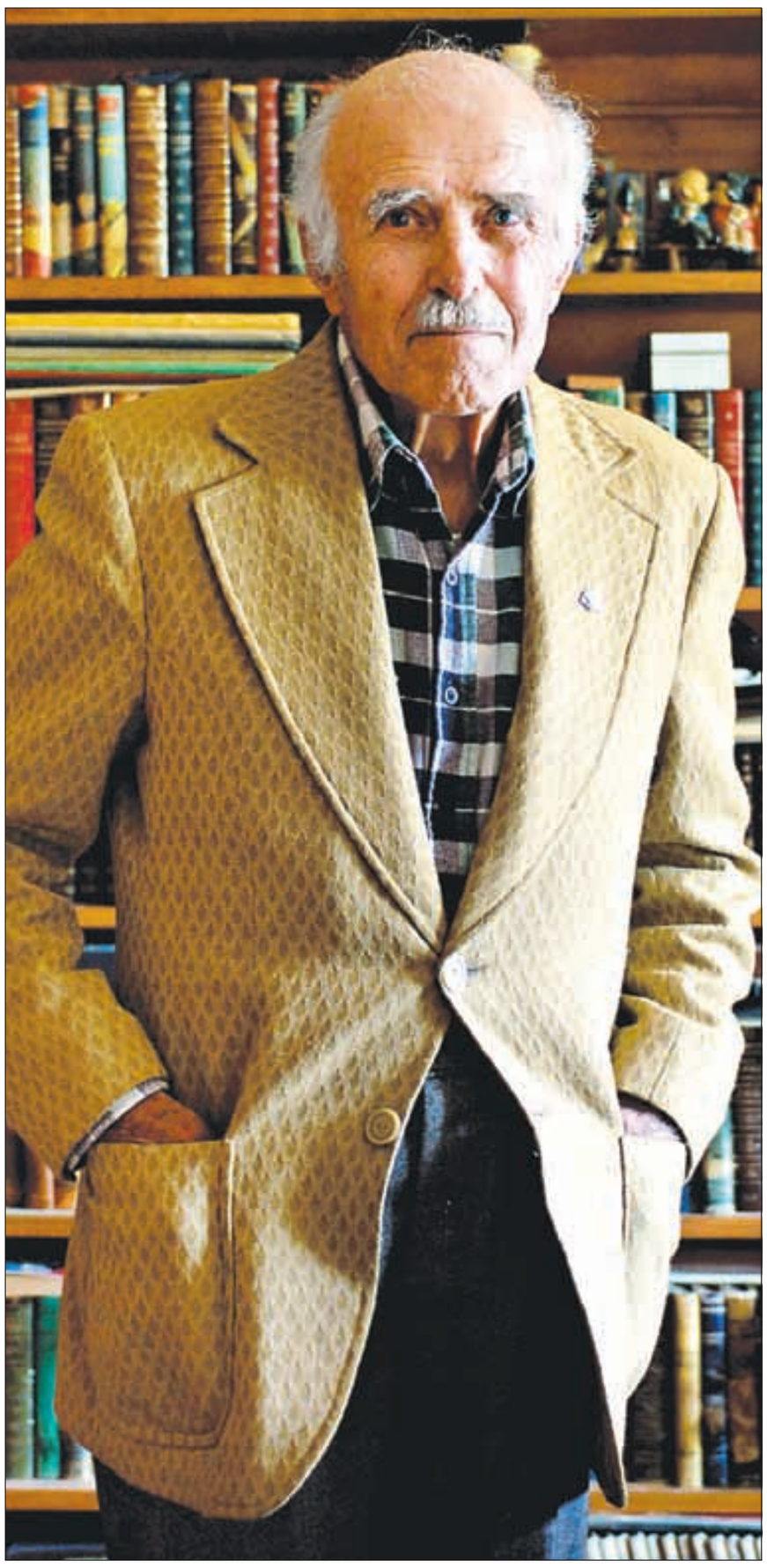
Wartime fascist denies targeting Jews



Under investigation: 89-year-old Lajos Polgar in his Ferntree Gully home Picture: Heath Missen

'Innocent people': Arrow Cross leaders

Natasha Robinson

A FORMER high-ranking official in Hungary's wartime fascist government who fled to Australia under an assumed name in 1949 yesterday denied his party had been responsible for the deportation or murder of Jews.

Lajos Polgar, who has lived in Melbourne for more than 50 years since fleeing war crimes prosecutors, admitted yesterday he had been a youth leader in the anti-Semitic Arrow Cross party and worked as secretary to Josef Gera, a senior leader in the Arrow Cross government that ruled under German occupation from October 1944 to January 1945.

Mr Polgar, 89, is facing fresh investigations into his background after his connections to the Arrow Cross regime were revealed by federal Labor MP Michael Danby at the weekend.

In a lengthy interview at his home in the Melbourne suburb of Ferntree Gully, Mr Polgar denied the Arrow Cross party was anti-Semitic, claiming "everybody in Hungary was anti-Jewish" during the war.

"After the war all the leaders were hanged, but there was not one among them who was guilty, really," Mr Polgar told *The Australian*. "At that time, you could not do anything because everybody was in the hands of the Jews. They just hanged them. Completely, completely innocent people."

Mr Polgar said Jews had not been deported to death camps under Arrow Cross. "It is not true. When the Jews were deported that party was not in power. How can we deport Jews when we are not in power?"

Mr Polgar's claim goes against the evidence assembled by historians that hundreds of thousands of Jews were deported to the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz between May and July 1944 under the direction of Arrow Cross partisans Laszlo Baky and Laszlo Endre.

Three days after the Arrow Cross assumed power in October 1944, the order was issued for the deportation of 35,000 Jews by rail and on foot to work as forced labourers in Austria.

Arrow Cross partisans murdered thousands more Jews on the streets of Budapest in October and November 1944, dumping their bodies in the River Danube.

Another Australian citizen, Charles Zentai from Perth, is fighting an extradition request for allegedly beating a Jewish teenager to death in Budapest in November 1944.

Mr Polgar came to Australia under the name of Lajos Kardos. He changed his name in December 1944 to elude prosecution for war crimes as the Arrow Cross government crumbled.

Jewish human rights organisation the Simon Wiesenthal Centre said it would immediately investigate whether Mr Polgar was responsible for any war crimes.

"There is no question that he's a Holocaust denier, but of course there's a difference between a Holocaust denier and a Nazi war criminal," said the centre's Jerusalem head Efraim Zuroff. But he said Mr Polgar's involvement in the Arrow Cross was a matter of concern.

"The Arrow Cross is a movement which actively participated in mass murder," Dr Zuroff said.

Mr Danby demanded yesterday to know how the Nazi sympathiser was allowed entry into Australia in 1949.

"He was clearly a top-ranking official in one of the most thuggish satellites of the Nazi regime," Mr Danby said. "Whether he lied to get into Australia is something that I want the Australian Government to investigate. I don't care whether it's 50 years late."

New scan to treat epilepsy

Clara Pirani
Medical reporter

A NEW brain-scanning technique developed by Melbourne researchers could provide hope for 40,000 Australians suffering from a crippling form of epilepsy by identifying suitable candidates for surgery that can stop their seizures.

Using the new technology, doctors can identify previously undetectable scarring in the brain that causes intractable epilepsy, a severe form of the disease that does not respond to medication.

While there is an 80 per cent success rate in reducing epileptic seizures using surgery, very few epilepsy patients are considered suitable for the procedure. The new technology will identify far more patients who should be undergoing surgery.

About 200,000 Australians have some form of epilepsy.

"This technology will greatly improve treatment options for people with epilepsy," Ingrid Scheffer, an epilepsy neurologist at the University of Melbourne and Austin Hospital, told *The Australian*.

People with epilepsy usually undergo a magnetic resonance imaging scan, followed by lifelong medication to control seizures or, in rare cases, surgery to remove damaged brain tissue.

However, existing MRI scans do not always identify the exact location and extent of brain scarring, making it difficult for doctors to predict who would benefit from surgery.

Pioneered by a team at the Brain Research Institute and Melbourne University's Epilepsy Research Centre at the Austin Hospital, the new technology allows for more extensive imaging inside the brain.

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