

When history is revisited, the madness of the Nazi terror in the Second World War is remembered with shudders down our spines. How could this depravity have happened? What would we have done? We reassure ourselves that this will never happen again.

The atrocities committed against mankind were at base level merely bullies with power. Surely this could not happen again; we tell ourselves.

Yet this influence still breeds.

The decisions made in relation to contact of children with violent parents are today's example of bullies with influence on the mindset of society, and have reached the echelons of those in positions who should know better.

To date, the bodies of babies and children killed at the hands of those who should have protected them continue to mount up, and children are forced to contact with violence and abusive parents, at all costs.

This year, we are reminded again of this madness with two more precious babies. The Dalton children were smothered to death by their father after the Family court initially granted him interim residence while their mother recovered in hospital from the abuse he himself had inflicted on her. That she was in the psychiatric ward somehow minimized the impact of the violence and transferred the negative assessment to her.

However, the real bewilderment is the urgent hearing before the judge presiding over the case and sought by the grandmother of these children. When the judge heard the evidence of the violence perpetrated on the mother, it was deemed that it was violence directed at her and therefore not the children.

How has it come to this in Australia 2004?

We all pride ourselves as Australians that part of our ethos is common sense. The truth is that bullies still influence our thinking, even those with a law degree and years of experience.

It is bullies that have changed the angle of thinking. It was violence towards the mother, not the children! They are only Jews, not really humans!

Twenty eight years ago, my own violent father sought custody of my youngest brother, and ongoing contact with my sister and I.

My mother went to court, in her broken English, and despite my father employing the services of barrister, the judge refused to give him not only custody of my brother, but ongoing contact. We didn't want to see him anymore. Perhaps it had something to do with my mother's broken front teeth and the holes in our walls that my father inflicted in plain view of us.

That judge saved the lives of my siblings, my mother and I.

It would not be the case today. Instead, my mother would be blamed for "influencing" the children against the father, and we would have been forced to have kept seeing him. The times he terrorized us would today be regarded as "isolated" incidents. The father would be reported as needing to have "a loving relationship with the children" despite the lack of "loving examples" while we were with him.

How the bullies have swung the pendulum, and the nails in the coffins and our minds.