

**PETER  
YELDHAM**

*A Distant Shore*

PENGUINBOOKS

Published by the Penguin Group  
Penguin Group (Australia)  
250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124, Australia  
(a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd)  
Penguin Group (USA) Inc.  
375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA  
Penguin Group (Canada)  
90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Canada ON M4P 2Y3  
(a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.)  
Penguin Books Ltd  
80 Strand, London WC2R ORL England  
Penguin Ireland  
25 Sr Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland  
(a division of Penguin Books Ltd)  
Penguin Books India Pvc Ltd  
11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi - 110 017, India  
Penguin Group (NZ)  
67 Apollo Drive, Mairangi Bay, Auckland 1310, New Zealand  
(a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd)  
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd  
24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196, South Africa

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London, WC2R ORL, England

First published by Penguin Group (Australia), 2010

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Copyright © Peter Yeldham 2009

The moral right of the author has been asserted

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

Cover design by Marina Messiha mPenguin Group (Australia)

Text design Cathy Larsen © Penguin Group (Australia)

Cover images: Richard Cummins/Corbis; Tom Stoddart/Getty Images and Jupiter Images

Typeset in ITC Legacy by Post Pre-press Group, Brisbane, Queensland

Printed and bound in Australia by McPherson's Printing Group, Maryborough, Victoria

National Library of Australia Cataloguing-in-Publication data

Yeldham, Peter.

A distant shore / Peter Yeldham.

9780143203131

A823.3

[penguin.com.au](http://penguin.com.au)



MixedSources  
hod. grow keurrell.maas.  
loran and ale \*NW warm

[www.fsc.org](http://www.fsc.org)  
Cenil  
01916FortoSuwaraCenil

*For my brother Dick,  
School teacher, soldier, salesman, farmer*

# Prologue

I was nineteen the first time I saw Katerina. It was during the hot summer of 1968; she was seventeen years old. I doubt if she even noticed me, for this was at a crowded New Year's Eve party, and my reticence kept it a distant admiration. Besides, she was in love with someone else.

We were the new generation called baby boomers, and had been told we were the heirs to an exciting age. It felt more like an unstable and turbulent age: an American president we admired was assassinated; his brother, who might have been president, was shot on a public podium; there were riots, revolutions and the murder of peacemakers like Martin Luther King Jr. Russian tanks crushed rebellion in Prague, the French tested nuclear weapons in the Pacific, the Cold War was a threatening shroud we lived under, and the race to build the biggest bombs made us uneasy about the men whose fingers on atomic triggers had the capacity to destroy us.

It was little wonder we marched in protest. Katerina and I were allied in dissent against the Vietnam War, and in time our camaraderie forged a close friendship. I knew it could never be more than that, although when I left Australia it was she who came

to the wharf at Woolloomooloo to say an emotional goodbye and wish me luck. She was married by then so youthful dreams were in vain, but my abiding memory was her slim figure, her dress ruffled by the breeze as she stood waving, before the cargo ship the cheapest passage I could afford - edged into the harbour and turned northward from Australia towards the rest of the world.

It was the last time I saw her for thirty years.

By then she had created headlines, been vilified by the media and savagely traduced by radio luminaries on their chat shows. Then she was brought to trial in a closed court, in the name of national security. But regardless of the prohibited reportage from the courtroom, details did emerge. I'm told that despite her probable loss of freedom she appeared calm. It was unnecessary to add she looked beautiful; she had always been that.

It is on the public record that she pleaded guilty. Legend has it the judge asked if she had anything to say before he passed sentence. She replied she would like to quote something.

He wanted assurance that it was brief, and thus would not take up the court's valuable time.

She promised it was brief, and in the empty court she spoke in a voice that only His Honour, the prosecutor and a few officials could hear: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity, and should act towards each other in a spirit of brotherhood." Article One of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, that has been forgotten lately in this country.'

It was rumoured the judge frowned, and expressed himself forcibly when sentencing. The media was allowed to report only that the accused had been sent to prison for four years. It seemed unbelievably severe, without impartiality or mercy. When I heard, I thought surely there would be outrage.

## A DISTANT SHORE

But this was Australia in 2002, I was reminded. A very different place to the one I'd left years earlier. A far harsher country. Rigid new security laws, the interception of the Norwegian ship *Tampa*, claims of children thrown overboard and the Pacific Solution - it was an Australia I would not easily recognise. It was a time when fear ruled, and the safeguards of Magna Carta and *habeas corpus* were endangered. An unhappy and troubled time, when we lost integrity, and felt like strangers to ourselves.

As for the sentence, I was told most people were satisfied she had been dealt with so firmly. Opinion polls all declared that justice had been done.