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Peace Leaflets A Starting point for Dialogue

HATRED OF FOREIGNERS

A young woman boards a Vienna street car, holding a sausage on a bun in one hand, a can of Coke in the other. When she opens the can, some of the Coke sprays over her blue jeans and onto the empty seat next to her. I could not see whether the other passengers' clothes got wet as well.

I witnessed the ensuing altercation:

One lady sitting in front of her, said, "A street car is not a lunch counter – go back to where you come from!"

"Don't get upset, nothing happened to you," replied the girl, in passable German.

"Don't get fresh on top of it," shot back the angry woman.

At this point an elderly gentleman started to rail at present day politicians. When he failed to generate any response, he toned down somewhat and said, "Raab, Körner, Figl...they were exemplary people."

Another passenger entered the fray. "At least clean up the mess you made, before someone else sits down on it."

The girl did not do so. The angry woman went to the streetcar driver and complained to him. "What can I do about it?" he said. That response elicited a swear word from the woman. "Say that once more," replied the driver "and I'll kick you out."

When the girl got ready to get off without having cleaned up the wet seat, another passenger remarked, "The way you behave leads exactly to what you want to avoid: hatred of foreigners!" Another elderly man jumped at the chance to enlarge on that subject by swearing loudly at "Yugos" and "Turks" in general. This prompted an older lady to remind him in a friendly manner that he was degrading people that may have been his own ancestors.

After the girl had left the street car, a young fellow who had listened in on the altercation, but had said nothing himself, took a Kleenex out of his pocket and cleaned up the wet seat...