

360 Degrees

By Sophy Churches

Looking at 0 degrees I see a baby being born in a ruined cellar of a house that was completely bombed. The cellar is full of debris. The baby's head is showing and the mother is screaming from pain. Another woman is helping her, blood covers their thin blanket. Half an hour later the enemy's bombs start again, everybody runs from the cellar to find a safer place. The woman and the baby cannot run. She covers herself and the baby with blankets that she finds left in the cellar. She leans over the baby in that terrible rumble and cries. This is somewhere in the Middle East.

I am looking at 90 degrees to the right and I see a couple with two children. They could not pay rent and their landlord has turned them out. With the last drops of gas in the car, they drive to a homeless shelter. Fortunately they get a room. They brought a few morsels of food from home. They have no money to buy anything. They share one can of mixed vegetables from the home stock. A few blankets and a few games that came from home occupy the children. The nearest school is unknown to them. The boy was a straight "A" student in school. He has a purpose in life, he wants to go to college to become an engineer. The girl is an excellent gymnast, she has plans, although she is only 10 years old. Next day, they walk around the city, looking inside trash cans for edibles. This is in the United States of America.

I turn my head 180 degrees. Great celebrations are enjoyed when Johnny Marshall graduates from University. He smiles as his whole family attends the graduation ceremony where the Dean hands over Johnny's diploma. The family and friends congratulate each other. Johnny and his family go home where a wonderful garden party is arranged in the graduate's honor. All the best foods arrive from a hotel and waiters circle the crowd to pour champagne. Johnny's father hands over a 100,000 pound check to him, everybody claps and sing "Oh, what a jolly good fellow." After his Caribbean vacation, Johnny takes a job as vice president at his father's business with a monthly salary of 65,000 pounds. This is England.

At 270 degrees, there is an old lady in her cold apartment, the central heating is broken. She is wrapped in wooly stockings, many blankets cover her body. She likes hot tea, a neighbor brings her that. They bring her food by the Meals on Wheels program which she gratefully accepts. She always eats the soups but they do not have it every day. The meat is too chewy for her. This is Russian welfare.

At 360 degrees, I do not see anymore. I have glaucoma. I am getting around in my apartment by touching the furniture. I worry a lot about the future. All I want to do is to die, I do not enjoy life anymore. My friends and relatives have all died. I think I am going to take all those pills tonight that the doctor gave me for pain. I live in Hungary.