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Smith, Cedric A.B.
Did Erdős save western civilization? (In English)
Graham, Ronald L. (ed.) et al., The mathematics of Paul Erdős. Vol. I. Berlin: Springer, Algorithms Comb. 13, 74-85 (1997). [ISBN 3-540-61032- 4/hbk]

In an anecdotal manner the author describes how he became acquainted in the 1930s with a geometric conjecture by Paul Erdős on the dissection of a square into a finite number of smaller squares. As a student in Cambridge (England) he was introduced to the problem by Arthur Stone. They jointly discussed with R. L. Brooks and then chemist William T. Tutte the relation of that conjecture to Kirchhoff's theory of electrical networks. They finally (1940) showed Erdős's conjecture to be incorrect. Tutte, later founding President of the Institute of Combinatorics and Its Applications, became involved into the work at Bletchley Park during World War II, where the German submarine code was broken. Since he had been drawn into mathematics by Erdős's conjecture the author is led to the provoking title of this paper.

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