

# SHALOM

*Jewish Peace Letter*

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## The Untold War Story



**ADAM HOCHSCHILD** recounts pacifist struggles during 'the war to end all wars'

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**'Who Stole My Religion?'**

# Stefan Merken

## Ignorant Warmongers

**R**ECENTLY, THE DRUMS OF WAR HAVE BEEN BEATING a tattoo against Iran. These demands have become louder and louder. Israeli and Congressional hawks, AIPAC, of course, and neoconservatives who helped instigate our two failed wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, lead the pack. Much of this bellicose behavior coincided with Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to the US and his meeting with President Obama. And then there are the coming elections, with three of the four Republicans running for the nomination and the White House — none of them having served in the military — expressing eagerness to move against Iran. Their insistence on joining the hawks comes on the heels of reported resistance of US intelligence agencies, the Pentagon and even Israeli intelligence officials, such as former Israeli Mossad chief Meir Dagan who aired his objections on CBS's *Sixty Minutes* in March.

I believe that the older most people become, the more they

**STEFAN MERKEN** is chair of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.

realize the fruitlessness of war and how the costs of fighting any war are too high, especially when weighed against the presumed benefits. Violence has not resolved many conflicts and certainly not in the Middle East.



*A Happy Passover to All From The Jewish Peace Fellowship*

In this issue of SHALOM, Jeremy Kuzmarov writes a moving piece about Brian Willson's journey from conservative Goldwater supporter to radical peace activist and environmentalist. Also in this issue is Adam Hochschild's "The Untold War Story," an essay about movies, TV and war resisters during World War I, which questions why we know more about war than peace. Sheldon Richman also reminds us that it is the seventieth anniversary of President Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066, which resulted in the creation of "War Relocation Camps" for a hundred and ten thousand Japanese Americans who

lived along the Pacific Coast.

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Adam Hochschild

## The Untold War Story

### *Going Beyond the Tale of a Boy and His Horse*



*"Down in a Shell crater, We Fought Like Kilkenny Cats — Battle of Cambrai": UK soldiers in trenches, with a tank in background, during World War I.*

**W**ELL IN ADVANCE OF THE 2014 CENTENNIAL OF the beginning of "the war to end all wars," the First World War is suddenly everywhere in our lives. Stephen Spielberg's *War Horse* opened on 2,376 movie screens and collected six Oscar nominations, while the hugely successful play it's based on is still packing in the crowds in New York, and a second production is being readied to tour the country.

In addition, the must-watch TV soap opera, *Downton Abbey*, recently concluded its season on an unexpected kiss. In seven episodes, its upstairs-downstairs world of forbidden love and dy-

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**ADAM HOCHSCHILD** is the author of *King Leopold's Ghost* and *Bury the Chains*, among other works. His latest best-selling book, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), focuses on the antiwar critics of World War I. Now available in paperback, it is a finalist for both the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize. This essay appeared originally in TomDispatch.com. Copyright © 2012 Adam Hochschild.

nastic troubles took American viewers from mid-war, 1916, beyond the Armistice, with the venerable Abbey itself turned into a convalescent hospital for wounded troops. Other dramas about the 1914-1918 war are on the way, among them an HBO-BBC miniseries based on Ford Madox Ford's *Parade's End* quartet of novels, and a TV adaptation of Sebastian Faulks's novel *Birdsong* from an NBC-backed production company.

In truth, there's nothing new in this. Filmmakers and novelists have long been fascinated by the way the optimistic, sunlit, pre-1914 Europe of emperors in plumed helmets and hussars on parade so quickly turned into a mass slaughterhouse on an unprecedented scale. And there are good reasons to look at the First World War carefully and closely.

After all, it was responsible for the deaths of some nine million soldiers and an even larger number of civilians. It helped ignite the Armenian genocide and the Russian Revolution, left large swaths of Europe in smoldering ruins, and remade the world for the worse in almost every conceivable way — above all, by laying the groundwork for a second and even more deadly,

even more global war.

There are good reasons as well for us to be particularly haunted by what happened in those war years to the country that figures in all four of these film and TV productions: Britain. In 1914, that nation was at the apex of glory, the unquestioned global superpower, ruling over the largest empire the world had ever seen. Four and a half years later its national debt had increased tenfold, more than seven hundred and twenty thousand British soldiers were dead, and hundreds of thousands more seriously wounded, many of them missing arms, legs, eyes, genitals.

The toll fell particularly heavily on the educated classes that supplied the young lieutenants and captains who led their troops out of the trenches and into murderous machine-gun fire. To give but a single stunning example, of the men who graduated from Oxford in 1913, thirty-one percent were killed.

### *“Swept Away in a Red Blast of Hate”*

Yet curiously, for all the spectacle of boy and horse, thundering cavalry charges, muddy trenches, and wartime love and loss, the makers of *War Horse*, *Downton Abbey* and — I have no doubt — the similar productions we’ll soon be watching, largely skip over the greatest moral drama of those years of conflict, one that continues to echo in our own time of



*Eugene V. Debs.*

costly and needless wars. They do so by leaving out part of the cast of characters of that moment. The First World War was not just a battle between rival armies, but also a powerful, if one-sided, battle between those who assumed the war was a noble crusade and those who thought it absolute madness.

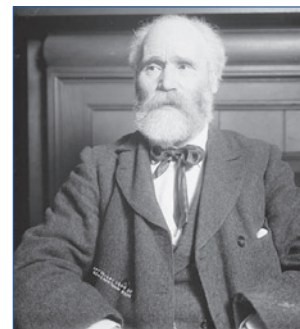
The war’s opponents went to jail in many countries. There were more than five hundred conscientious objectors imprisoned in the United States in those years, for example, plus others jailed for speaking out against joining the conflict. Eugene V. Debs had known prison from his time as a railway union leader, but he spent far longer behind bars — more than two years — for urging American men to resist the draft. Convicted of sedition, he was still in his cell at the federal penitentiary in Atlanta in November 1920 when, long after the war ended, he received nearly a million votes as the Socialist Party’s candidate for president.

One American protest against the war turned to tragedy when, in 1917, Oklahoma police arrested nearly five hundred draft resisters — white, black, and Native American — taking part in what they called the Green Corn Rebellion against “a rich man’s war, poor man’s fight.” Three were killed and many injured.

War resisters were also thrown in jail in Germany and Russia. But the country with the largest and best organized antiwar movement — and here’s where the creators of those film and TV costume dramas so beloved by Anglophile American audiences miss a crucial opportunity — was Britain.

The main reason opposition to the war proved relatively strong there was simple enough: in 1914, the island nation had not been attacked. German invaders marched into France and Belgium, but Germany hoped Britain would stay out of the war. And so did some Britons. When their country joined the fighting on the grounds that Germany had violated Belgian neutrality, a vocal minority continued to insist that jumping into a quarrel among other countries was a disastrous mistake.

Keir Hardie was a prominent early war opponent. A trade union leader and Member of Parliament, he had, by the age of twenty-one, already spent half his life as a coal miner and he never went to school. Nonetheless, he became one of the great orators of the age, mesmerizing crowds with his eloquence, his piercing, heavy-browed eyes, and a striking red beard. Crushed with despair that millions of Europe’s working men were slaughtering one another rather than making common cause in fighting for their rights, his beard white, he died in 1915, still in his fifties.



*Keir Hardie.*

Among those who bravely challenged the war fever, whose rallies were often violently broken up by the police or patriotic mobs, was well-known radical feminist Charlotte Despard. Her younger brother, amazingly, was Field Marshal Sir John French, commander-in-chief of the Western Front for the first year and a half of the war. A similarly riven family was the famous Pankhurst clan of suffragettes: Sylvia Pankhurst became an outspoken opponent of the conflict, while her sister Christabel was from the beginning a fervent drum-beater for the war effort. They not only stopped speaking to each other, but published rival newspapers that regularly attacked the other’s work.

Britain’s leading investigative journalist, Edmund Dene Morel, and its most famous philosopher, Bertrand Russell, were both passionate war critics. “This war is trivial, for all its vastness,” Russell wrote. “No great principle is at stake, no great human purpose is involved on either side.” He was appalled to see his fellow citizens “swept away in a red blast of hate.”

He wrote with remarkable candor about how difficult it was to go against the current of the national war fever “when the whole nation is in a state of violent collective excitement. As much effort was required to avoid sharing this excitement as would have been needed to stand out against the extreme of hunger or sexual passion, and there was the same feeling of going against instinct.”

Both Russell and Morel spent six months in prison for their beliefs. Morel served his term at hard labor, carrying hundred-pound slabs of jute to the prison workshop while subsisting on a bare-bones diet during a frigid winter when prison furnaces were last in line for the nation’s scarce supply of coal.

Women like Violet Tillard went to jail as well. She worked for an antiwar newspaper banned in 1918 and was imprisoned for refusing to reveal the location of its clandestine printing press.

And among the unsung heroines of that antiwar moment was Emily Hobhouse, who secretly traveled through neutral Switzerland to Berlin, met the German foreign minister, talked over possible peace terms, and then returned to England to try to do the same with the British government. Its officials dismissed her as a lone-wolf eccentric, but in a conflict that killed some twenty million people, she was the sole human being who journeyed from one side to the other and back again in search of peace.

### *Why We Know More About War Than Peace*

By the war's end, more than twenty thousand British men had defied the draft and, as a matter of principle, many also refused the alternative service prescribed for conscientious objectors, like ambulance driving at the front or working in a war industry. More than six thousand of them were put behind bars — up to that moment the largest number of people ever imprisoned for political reasons in a western democracy.

There was nothing easy about any of this. Draft refusers were mocked and jeered (mobs threw rotten eggs at them when given the chance), jailed under harsh conditions, and lost the right to vote for five years. But with war's end, in a devastated country mourning its losses and wondering what could possibly justify that four-year slaughter, many people came to feel differently about the resisters. More than half a dozen were eventu-

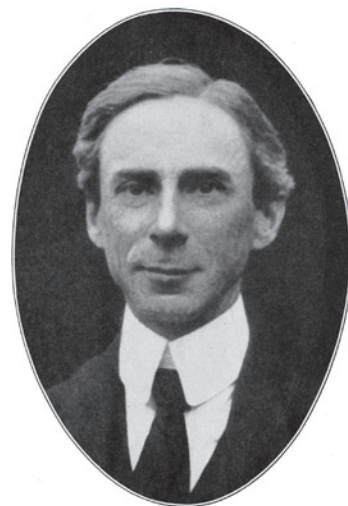


*Sylvia Pankhurst.*

ally elected to the House of Commons and the journalist Morel became the Labour Party's chief Parliamentary spokesperson on foreign affairs. Thirty years after the Armistice, a trade unionist named Arthur Creech Jones, who had spent two and a half years in prison as a war resister, was appointed to the British cabinet.

The bravery of such men and women in speaking their minds on one of the great questions of the age cost them dearly: in public scorn, prison terms, divided families, lost friends and jobs. And yet they are largely forgotten today at a moment when resistance to pointless wars should be celebrated. Instead we almost always tend to celebrate those who fight wars — win or lose — rather than those who oppose them.

It's not just the films and TV shows we watch, but the monuments and museums we build. No wonder, as General Omar Bradley once said, that we "know more about war than we know about peace." We tend to think of wars as occasions for heroism, and in a narrow, simple sense they can be. But a larger heroism, sorely lacking in Washington this last decade, lies in daring to think through whether a war is worth fighting at all. In looking for lessons in wars past, there's a much deeper story to be told than that of a boy and his horse. ✧



*Bertrand Russell.*

## Sheldon Richman

# A Day That Will Live in Infamy



*May 30, 1942: Manzanar Relocation Center, California. Evacuees watch Memorial Day services.*

**L**EST WE FORGET, FEBRUARY 17 was the seventieth anniversary of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's signing of Executive Order 9066, which resulted in internment in "War Relocation Camps" (aka concentration camps) of some one hundred and ten thousand Japanese Americans and Japanese who lived along the Pacific coast.

Two years later the US Supreme Court, in *Korematsu v. United States*, upheld the

**SHeldon RICHMAN** keeps the blog "Free Association" ([www.sheldonrichman.com](http://www.sheldonrichman.com)).

order, 6-to-3. In the majority were the noted civil libertarians and FDR appointees Hugo Black, who wrote the opinion, and William O. Douglas and Felix Frankfurter. The other three were also appointed by Roosevelt. Dissenting were Owen J. Roberts (appointed by Herbert Hoover), and Robert Jackson and Frank Murphy (appointed by FDR).

Any resemblance to the National Defense Authorization Act's provision for indefinite detention without due process, signed recently by President Obama, is strictly ominous. ✧

## Jeremy Kuzmarov

# A Genuine American Hero

**O**N SEPTEMBER 1, 1987, S. BRIAN WILLSON, a Vietnam veteran, was run over by a train outside the Concord Naval Weapons Station in Northern California while trying to block munitions shipments to the Nicaraguan Contras. Willson lost his legs and suffered brain damage. After his miraculous recovery, he was greeted as a national hero in Nicaragua, and received a letter of apology from Ronald Reagan's daughter, Patti Davis, who told him that she was sickened by her father's "aggressively anti-Sandinista rhetoric" and "absurd reference to the Contras as freedom fighters."

In *Blood on the Tracks: The Life and Times of S. Brian Willson: A Psychohistorical Memoir* (with introduction by Daniel Ellsberg; Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2011), Willson discusses his remarkable life journey from a young conservative to a peace activist willing to sacrifice his body in defiance of the empire for which he once fought.

Willson grew up in upstate New York, where he had a conventional boyhood playing cowboys and Indians and starring on his high school baseball and basketball teams. His parents were religious conservatives who supported the Republican Party. His father gravitated to extremist right-wing organizations, such as the John Birch Society and the Ku Klux Klan, after losing his job as manager of a flour mill. In 1964, after graduating from a small Baptist college, Willson supported Barry Goldwater for president and advocated "bombing the godless Communists in Vietnam into oblivion."

When he joined the Air Force, one of Willson's assignments was to document bombing casualties in Vinh Long province, which opened his eyes to the terrible suffering caused by the war. Before going overseas, he heard Alaska's Senator Ernest Gruening give a speech in which he described the Gulf of Tonkin attack as a fraud. At the time, Willson had been skeptical, but now he began to consider it in a new light,

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**JEREMY KUZMAROV** is an assistant professor of history at the University of Tulsa, author of a book on Vietnam and the "war on drugs," and a forthcoming volume on American police training and counterinsurgency and its link to human rights abuses in the developing world.



*S. Bryan Willson.*

particularly as he witnessed US pilots mercilessly strafe villages, killing women and children. Near the end of his tour, Willson had dinner with a Vietnamese friend, whose family showed him a postage stamp honoring Norman Morrison, the Quaker peace activist who immolated himself outside Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara's office. By this time, Willson had come to feel a connection to Morrison, someone who grew up just miles from his boyhood home.

After returning to the United States, Willson participated in Operation Dewey Canyon III, "a limited incursion in the country of Congress" where disgruntled vets hurled their medals over the Capitol fence, stating that the medals were "drenched in the blood of the innocent." Settling back into civilian life, Willson earned his law degree and worked as a public defender, penal consultant and social worker, witnessing firsthand what he considered to be the injustices of the court and penal systems. He became increasingly disillusioned by mainstream politics after having difficulty lobbying for basic penal reforms. Willson's political perspective was further shaped by his extensive reading in the history of US imperialism as well as anarchist and socialist philosophies. While living in Washington, he attended lectures by people such as Noam Chomsky and encountered noncon-

formists such as Wally and Juanita Nelson, tax resisters who had been active in the civil rights movement and believed that each person had a duty to consume only what he or she could produce.

During the early 1980s, after experiencing painful flashbacks to Vietnam, Willson worked at a local VA center and aided in the Senate campaign of John F. Kerry, who later disappointed him by voting for the Iraq War. Seeing Nicaragua as yet another potential Vietnam, Willson became a tax resister and joined in solidarity missions, where he witnessed terrorist atrocities carried out by Contra operatives against rural campesinos who predominantly supported the socialist Sandinistas. As with the Vietnamese

a decade earlier, Willson came to admire people who struggled valiantly in defense of their revolution. He also became connected with kindred spirits such as Charlie Liteky, a Congressional Medal of Honor winner turned peace activist; Phil Roettinger, a dissident CIA agent who had participated in the 1954 coup in Guatemala, and Bill Gandall, who had fought with the Marines against the original Sandinistas in the 1920s.

Back in the US, Willson gave lectures documenting Contra atrocities and attempted in vain to convince congressional delegates of the immorality of Reagan's foreign policy. One congressman, Douglas Wayne Owens of Utah asked him, "Why should I believe someone who looks like you," a reference presumably to his long hair. Devastated by this experience, Willson and several cohorts from Veterans for Peace, including Liteky and Roettinger, launched a forty-day fast on the Capitol steps which attracted wide-scale media attention and support from celebrities. The group then attempted to block US weapons shipments, which led to the fateful train wreck in which Willson lost his legs (the others were able to escape just before being hit). The conductors, as he later found out, were under orders not to stop for protesters,



*S. Bryan Willson, in front, cycling with other veterans in a 2006 group ride.*

considered to be "pests" who threatened to arouse others from their indifference and passivity.

After recovering from his wounds and returning to Nicaragua as a hero, Willson traveled to many other countries devastated directly or indirectly by US intervention, including El Salvador, Panama, Cuba, Palestine, Chiapas, Mexico and Iraq. One again he was appalled at the devastation bred by mechanized warfare, but took inspiration from those who stood up for indigenous rights. Willson's experiences ultimately helped to solidify his belief that the roots of American militarism lay with the incessant consumerism of American society. He continues his work as a peace activist

and has decided to opt out of what he calls the American Way of Life, focusing instead on living a simple, ecologically sustainable life in rural Massachusetts. Like other anarchist thinkers, Willson believes in decentralized systems of power and self-reliant communities that function at one with nature, which he believes hold the key to human sustainability and progress over the long term.

Willson's journey from conservative Goldwater supporter to radical peace activist and environmentalist is incredibly inspiring and his memoir should be widely read. Over the past five decades he has encountered the range of human experience, including the barbarism of modern war, the arrogance of power and the banality of evil, as well as the courage of peace activists and dissenters, and the dignity of those struggling to survive against the odds. He himself appears to carry on his back the weight of the American Century, with all its violence and destructiveness, and which has taken a profound psychological and physical toll on him. Nevertheless, Willson has emerged strong and defiant and with a vision for the future. He is a wise and courageous man, and from him we have much to learn. ✧

## SHALOM *Jewish Peace Letter*

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Murray Polner

## Our Latest Senseless, Never-Ending War

**M**ICHAEL HASTINGS IS A YOUNG JOURNALIST WHO was assigned by *Rolling Stone* to do a profile of General Stanley McChrystal, who willingly agreed to be interviewed. For one month in Europe and Afghanistan he hung around the general and his devoted hand-picked team while they partied and drank before departing for the war zone. They must have been aware that, as they spoke freely and critically about their political and civilian bosses back home, Hastings's tape recorder was running, and *The Operators: The Wild and Terrifying Inside Story of America's War in Afghanistan* (Blue Rider Press/Penguin) is his much enlarged report.

Shortly after the *Rolling Stone* profile was published, McChrystal was fired and replaced by General David Petraeus, now head of the CIA. It reminded many, including President Obama, of President Harry Truman's dismissal of General Douglas McArthur for insubordination during the Korean War. NBC News quoted Obama saying that McChrystal's comments "undermine the civilian control of the military that is at the core of our democratic system."

But had the general really gone too far in overstepping the line between civilian and military control? Whatever the truth, in Hastings' eyes McChrystal was an admirable if complex personality, a scholarly military man someone once dubbed a "warrior poet," and intensely loyal to his personal staff and troops under his command. Hastings confessed, "I'd liked hanging out with McChrystal and his team, yet I hated the war."

McChrystal arrived after the intense controversy concerning the death of Pat Tillman, former Arizona Cardinal football player turned army volunteer who died of friendly fire and the tale of whose "heroic" death the Tillman family rightly charged was initially fabricated by a Pentagon eager for some good publicity. Tillman's father alleged the general was involved in a "falsified homicide investigation" and his

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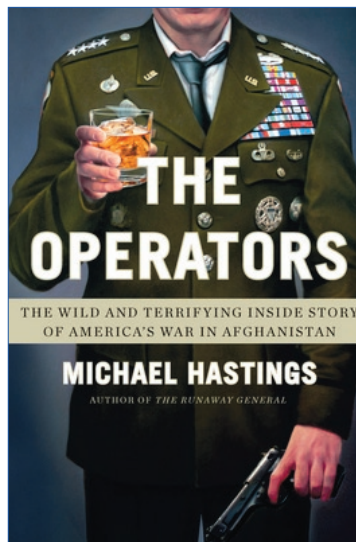
MURRAY POLNER, co-editor of *SHALOM*, wrote *No Victory Parades: The Return of the Vietnam Veteran*, and co-edited *We Who Dared To Say No To War*.

mother complained to Obama, who — here I speculate — may not have wanted to confront the Pentagon, hoping that Robert Gates, his defense secretary and Republican holdover from George Bush's cabinet, would protect him from Republican attacks charging he was weak on "national security." Still, the truth is that many inside Washington hardly cared very much and the Senate confirmed McChrystal's appointment without a nay vote. On June 9, 2009, McChrystal was greeted by the mass media as our latest savior in Afghanistan.

Both media people and politicians who barely knew him hailed his promotion as head of all forces in Afghanistan (while ignoring the long and honorable service of his predecessor, General David McKiernan, who was unceremoniously dumped by the Pentagon), much as they would the appointment of his successor Petraeus. In their minds it seemed that McChrystal was the kind of tough guy who was the right man for the toughest, most difficult of assignments.

During Hastings' stay in Afghanistan the war had been going badly. No matter how much our hawkish home-front heroes have cheered on the war and kept it going, British World War I veteran Charles Edward Montague's scornful words, "War hath no fury like a noncombatant," is equally true today. Neither the Taliban nor President Hamid Karzai, whatever their many failings, see themselves as anything but Afghans, not mere subjects of an alien power. Hastings's chapter on the complicated Karzai is a gem, with McChrystal properly trying to brief him about a planned assault on the town of Marja, and the president repeatedly ignoring him because he supposedly has a cold. They finally met, but in the end the Marja campaign led to twenty-five American deaths and apparently didn't do much to change the overall situation.

Hastings duly notes what is well-known about the war, the people and the nation we are supposedly fighting to defend: Afghan corruption, especially among the Kabul elite, army and police; the prevalence of a warlord-controlled drug traffic; massive illiteracy, extensive poverty, and unrelenting Taliban opposition, and the many billions wasted on the en-





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tire misadventure. *The Operators* also touches on bitter bureaucratic fights involving the Afghans, the US embassy and the military. He has a poignant section on the death of an army corporal. One need only think of Washington-based big shots flying in for a few days for military briefings and then returning home to demand more troops and more war.

Obviously, Hastings admires the “skeptical coverage” by journalists in a Viet-

nam War he was too young to know. Citing David Halberstam, he says: “The war had been exposed as the Giant Lying Machine. It was all, it seemed, a scam.” He adds that in spite of the best efforts of today’s military, “The simple and terrifying reality, forbidden from discussion in America, was that despite spending \$600 billion a year on the military, despite having the best fighting force the world had ever known, they [our military] were getting their asses kicked by illiterate peasants who made bombs out of manure and wood.”

The second half of the book is where Hastings strikes back at journalists who accused him of reporting talk by McChrystal and his staff that should have never been publicly aired. He clearly resents being singled out by reporters who are angry that he dared to write what he saw and heard, rather than remaining silent. Still, among his allegations that should have been excluded is that some reporters (if true, they are unnamed) received payments from war industries and think tanks about whom they are supposed to write, claiming the story was told him by an unidentified *Newsweek* correspondent. That’s simply unacceptable. Naming names is crucial; otherwise, delete the reference. Yet he’s on target in writing that for some it’s okay to go after someone like Sarah Palin



An “Operator”: U.S. Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the U.S. Forces -Afghanistan and International Security Assistance Forces commander, left, at Camp Eggers, Kabul, Nov. 21, 2009.

but many practice self-censorship covering up serious blunders by their high-level VIP sources to preserve their access. Here, too, I wish he had named names.

The Afghan war continues, with only vague assurances about when and if it will lead to the withdrawal of all US forces. Like the invasion and occupation of Iraq, what really happened in Afghanistan and why it drags on remains a mystery to most Americans un-

aware of, or indifferent to, the ideological and political battles that infect Washington’s foreign policy circles. Historians will doubtless spend years arguing about the two wars and the personalities involved; but beyond a few memorials and parades most will forget the dead and grievously wounded. For this reason alone Hastings’s fascinating version is very worthwhile. While it may someday be challenged and revised, he is unquestionably correct that the two wars were pointless and unnecessary.

One of the books McChrystal read after arriving in Afghanistan to take command was Stanley Karnow’s classic *Vietnam: A History*. Quoting *Newsweek*, Hastings writes that the general asked the author if there were any lessons that might apply to Afghanistan. Karnow was said to have answered, “The main thing I learned is that we never should have been there in the first place,” a lesson this country, historically addicted to war, has never learned.

One has to wonder where we will intervene next. Iran? If so, we need to keep in mind a chilling comment once attributed to Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni: “If you like Iraq and Afghanistan, you’re going to love Iran.” Lessons unlearned are the lesson to be learned. ☆

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## Just Off the Press

SHALOM Contributing Editor Lawrence S. Wittner’s *Working for Peace and Justice: Memoirs of an Activist Intellectual* (University of Tennessee Press) is an engrossing personal and historical chronicle by a self-described “dissenting intellectual.” The book ranges from his earliest years to university teaching positions where some conservative faculty opponents sought to

deny him jobs because of his public stands against war and racism. Wittner’s earlier and seminal three-volume *A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* became the gold standard in war and peace scholarship. Now his perceptive and sensitive memoir can be a model for anyone wishing to write about weathering the academic and political storms of our time. ☆

## Alan Solomonow

# Remembering Peretz Kidron

**P**ERETZ KIDRON DIED SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2011, AT the age of eighty-two, after a protracted battle with cancer. His passing marks the loss of a memorable, insightful and often humorous voice for Palestinian-Israeli peace.

Peretz began visiting the United States in the early 1970s, traveling around the country, speaking to many people less than sympathetic to Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and peace.

In notably classic Jewish style, Peretz answered questions (even the most hostile) with a question and often a story that helped to focus on the human dimension of the query. One of his favorite presentations was “The Middle East Conflict in Seven Parables.”

Eventually, Pacifica Radio hired him as a correspondent, which introduced his British-accented humor to listeners. Peretz also wrote for *Middle East International* and numerous other publications. He had a strong and positive impact on the American left and advocates of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

In Israel, Peretz emerged as the spokesperson for Yesh G’vul, that remarkable organization of Israeli soldiers who refused to serve in the occupied territories. He raised funds in the US to help support dissenting soldiers whom the Israeli government often imprisoned. In this country he worked closely with the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the War Resisters League and the Middle East Peace Project.

Peretz was best known for his translation of Israeli books from Hebrew into English. Despite his avowedly left-leaning politics, many mainstream Israeli authors relied on him. One



*Peretz Kidron, June 2009.*

of them was the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, whose memoirs included an unprecedented reference to the Israeli Defense Force’s efforts to remove the Palestinians from their homes during the 1948 war. When the censors overruled Rabin, Peretz made sure that the censored information was leaked to *The New York Times*.

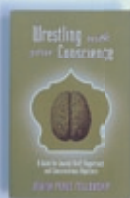
Peretz was reared in Kibbutz Zikkim. In the late ’60s he became active in Siah, the Israeli New Left organization. He became good friends with Palestinian leader and feminist Raymonda Tawil (whose daughter, Suha, married Yasir Arafat), and with whom he co-authored the book, *My Homes. My Prison*.

He lived outside of Jerusalem in Ein Kerem with his wife Hedva, an artist, for many years, and the garden in front of his house was a frequent gathering point for his diverse group of friends. He is survived by family in Berkeley and London. ☆

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**ALLAN SOLOMONOW** edited *Roots of Jewish Nonviolence*. He was JPF national director in 1968-69, and later served as director of the Middle East program for the American Friends Service Committee’s regional office in San Francisco.

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## J. Zel Lurie

# My Kid Brother Died at 96

**O**N LAST JANUARY'S PRESIDENTS DAY WEEKEND I flew to Virginia to attend the funeral of my kid brother, Leon, who had died at 96.

The obituary in *The Washington Post* said he had died peacefully but reluctantly in the arms of his partner, Alice. "He wanted to live forever," said the obit. That is a slight exaggeration. But he did want to outlast me, two years older. His heart gave up at 96. The funeral service at Congregation Etz Hayim, in Falls Church, was attended by close to two hundred people: family, friends, former patients and colleagues at the Washington School of Psychiatry.

Ninety years earlier, Leon had begun his education at a modern Orthodox day school with the same name, Yeshiva Etz Hayim in Brooklyn, New York.

As the last of six brothers, Leon did not have an easy childhood. He told his daughter Eve, and she repeated it at the funeral, that he had trouble getting into the family bathroom. Ted, six years his senior, who would become the editor of the pre-statehood *Palestine Post*, a newspaper widely distributed throughout the Middle East, "would lock the door and stay in there forever," Eve reported. I would use the maid's toilet. Probably more important, Leon felt that his mother had neglected him. He was about five when she was elected president of the Borough Park, Brooklyn, Hadassah, a post she held until his bar mitzvah, when she and my dad made aliyah to Haifa. She was busy day and night with Hadassah's affairs, leaving her two young ones in the care of the Polish maid. But she always knew what was going on.

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*JESSE ZEL LURIE is a journalist and was the longtime editor of Hadassah magazine.*

It took Leon about six years of therapeutic work and training in therapy to come to terms with what he thought was his mother's neglect and to go on to be a very successful psychiatrist. But he never really understood his mom. He told his youngest son, Jonathan, that my dad was a meek little man and that my mom wore the pants in the family. Not so. My father, who was small in size, made all the important decisions.

My mom was a dutiful Jewish housewife who brought up six sons and followed him to Palestine against her real wishes. She kept a kosher home, although she told me that it was nonsense. We had four sets of dishes and flatware and pots and pans: two, a set for milk and another for meat (and never the twain did meet), and a similar two sets for Passover, which Leon and I watched being unpacked and repacked after eight days of use. I was seven when mother began to devote most of her time to Hadassah, but I never felt neglected and never had therapy, probably to my loss.

I called Leon. It was a Saturday morning and he said in a strong voice, "I'm working." I remembered that he had a group session once a month on Saturday morning. I said "I'll call you tomorrow," but I forgot. I never spoke to him again. Actually, Leon and I had not had a serious conversation for thirty or forty years. That's a shame, because I might have learned something. He talked to his children and grandchildren. At the funeral, a granddaughter, Dr. Jennifer Weiss, an osteopathic physician, enumerated "some of the gifts he gave me." Here are some excerpts from her speech:

"Fearlessly and tirelessly examine yourself."

"Never keep a gift you don't want."

"Be skeptical but try it anyway."

"Tell the truth and know when you are lying."

"Ask for what you want."



*A Lurie family gathering, 1957: Leon Lurie and J. Zel Lurie (second and third from left), with great-grandfather Jacob (left).*

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“Cook with butter and enjoy the tea while it’s hot.”

I reflected on these maxims as I flew home to my luxury retirement home in Delray Beach. “Ask for what you want” came up at the Mardi Gras dinner that evening. Red beans and rice was on the menu. I told my partner Dorothy that I’d like red beans without rice. She said it is already mixed. “I’ll ask for it,” I said and I did, and soon a piping hot dish of delicious red beans without rice arrived.

On a higher level I wish that the serious gap between Hamas and Israel’s Likud government could be narrowed just as easily. I wish that instead of telling Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas that he can have peace or Hamas, not both, that Israel would ask Hamas to join the PLO and the peace process.

Ask for what you want and you might get it. Unfortunately the Israeli government is not ready to ask and the current government will not make the deep sacrifices on the West Bank it would have to make for peace. There are too many settlers, and all of them are armed. The most “pro-Israel” peace plan would displace about twenty percent of the settlers. Will they leave their homes without a fight? The violence of the “price tag” youth, who recently painted “Death to Christians” on a Jerusalem church, points to a civil war of Jew against Jew before there is peace with the Palestinians. When the Israel government overcomes all the obstacles that prevent it from negotiating a peace agreement, then they will ask Fatah and Hamas for peace and mean it. It won’t happen in my lifetime. I said at the funeral, “Goodbye, Leon, I’ll see you soon,” and my daughter, Ellen, burst into tears. ☆

## Tikkun Olam

Richard H. Schwartz  
with Rabbi Yonassan Gershom

# Revitalizing Judaism And Applying Jewish Values To Help Heal Our Imperiled Planet

**WHO STOLE MY RELIGION? (LULU PRESS, 2012)** IS meant to be a wake-up call. Its primary aim is to show that the world is heading toward a “perfect storm” of existential crises: sudden, catastrophic climate change; severe environmental degradation; devastating scarcities of food, water and energy, and other critical threats to life as we know and value it. This book argues that the application of Jewish values, such as pursuing justice and peace,

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**RICHARD SCHWARTZ**, *author of Who Stole My Religion?*, wrote *Judaism and Vegetarianism* and *Judaism and Global Survival*. He is president of the *Jewish Vegetarians of North America*. **RABBI YONASSAN GERSHOM** is a Hasidic Jew and freelance writer. His personal philosophical influences include *Gandhi, Thoreau, Francis of Assisi and Rebbe Nahman of Breslov*.

and working as partners with God in protecting the Earth, can contribute greatly to solving the world’s problems. Jews must become actively involved in the missions of global survival and Jewish renewal, working for major changes that will lead to a society where there is far less oppression, injustice, violence, hunger, poverty and alienation.

For some time now, I have felt that my religion has been “stolen” by right-wing politics. The book was motivated by my experiences at my modern Orthodox synagogue, where I have found fellow congregants to be actively involved in acts of kindness and charity, learning, and Jewish observance within their own community, but largely supporting conservatives with an increasingly dismal record on social action for other Americans and the world at large. However, I wish to be very clear that it is not only the Orthodox who are to

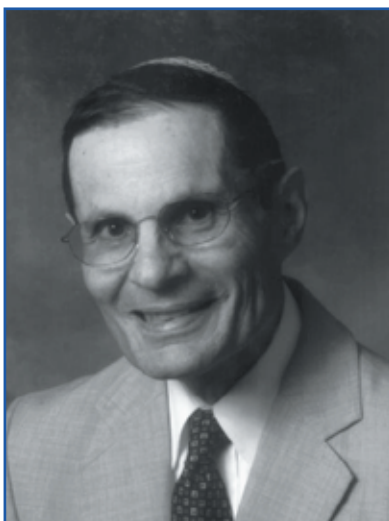
blame for this shift. The organized Jewish community in general has been moving away from the humanitarian, progressive values that have been a hallmark of our tradition for centuries.

One example is a recent article by a columnist in the *Jewish Press*, an Orthodox newspaper, which called environmental activists “*tikkun olam* pagans.” He openly ridiculed Jews who apply the term *tikkun olam* (“repairing the world”) to ecology and social action. When I challenged him in a letter to the editor, several readers defended his reactionary stance.

Nevertheless, such a position is inconsistent with that of contributors to the “Orthodox Forum Series” volume, *Tikkun Olam: Social Responsibility in Jewish Thought and Law*, who clearly apply *tikkun olam* to social issues. That book cites many distinguished Orthodox rabbis, including Samson Raphael Hirsch, Abraham Isaac Kook, Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, all of whom stress that Jews have a religious and ethical responsibility to work with others to promote the welfare of society. In his anthology, *Compassion for Humanity in the Jewish Tradition*, Rabbi Dovid Sears, a Breslov Hasid, discusses numerous source texts that indicate our responsibility for working to benefit all people. The phrase *tikkun olam* is not an invention of the modern liberal mind, but occurs many times in the Mishnah and later rabbinic literature.

Another important reason I believe my religion has been stolen is the widespread denial by so many Jews, especially Orthodox Jews, about climate change, at a time when Jews should be leading efforts to work toward stabilizing the world’s climate. The world is fast approaching an unprecedented climate catastrophe and is severely threatened by many other environmental problems. A letter published in the May 7, 2010, issue of the leading journal *Science*, signed by two hundred and fifty-five leading scientists who are members of the US National Academy of Sciences (USNAS), among whom eleven are Nobel laureates, states, “There is compelling, comprehensive, and consistent objective evidence that humans are changing the climate in ways that threaten our societies and the ecosystems on which we depend.” The lead signer, Pacific Institute President Peter Gleick, observed, “It is hard to get two hundred and fifty-five members of the [USNAS] to agree on pretty much anything, making the import of this letter even more substantial.”

Yet, in spite of these warnings, and in spite of Judaism’s



Richard H. Schwartz

many powerful teachings on environmental stewardship, the Jewish community (along with most other communities) is not adequately responding to today’s environmental crises. Many of my fellow congregants think that climate change arguments are a liberal scam led by Al Gore. They dismiss climate change as just “liberal politics,” and give more weight to the views of ultra-conservatives Glenn Beck, Rush Limbaugh, and other reactionary commentators than to the scientific consensus. Why should this be?

According to James Hoggan, author of *Climate Cover-Up: The Crusade To Deny Global Warming*, the oil, coal and other industries that are profiting from the status quo are willing to go to great lengths

to mislead people so that they can continue to receive huge profits. Hoggan, who was initially a skeptic about climate change, writes that it is a “story of betrayal, a story of selfishness, greed, and irresponsibility on an epic scale... a story of deceit, of poisoning public judgment...”

Another clue comes from the results of a study called, “Balance as Bias,” which considered a random sample of six hundred and thirty-six articles about climate change in *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. More than fifty percent of the articles gave roughly equal weight to both the scientific view and the scientifically discredited view that humans do not play a major role in climate change. This would be similar to having a debate on the shape of our planet, and giving equal time to the Flat Earth Society.

In addition to addressing these questions of social action and climate change, *Who Stole My Religion?* also tackles Israeli peace issues, the misuse of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism, US foreign policy, Islamophobia and socialism, vegetarianism and environmentalism. The book argues that Judaism is a radical religion because of its very strong teachings on justice, peace, sharing, compassion, activism, and environmental sustainability, and the radical teachings of the biblical prophets. In it, I urge my fellow Jews to return to our radical roots and be leaders in efforts to shift our imperiled world away from its current destructive path. I do not expect everyone to agree with every stance I take, but I do hope that the book will challenge the readers to rethink current issues in the light of positive Jewish values.

Additional information about the book is on our blog at [www.whostolemyreligion.com](http://www.whostolemyreligion.com). ☆

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