

# SHALOM

*Jewish Peace Letter*

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## *Gareth Porter*



*Minds that think alike:*

*Saudi Prince Turki Al Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (left) and Senator John McCain (right)*

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## Birthday Greetings

**I**N 1963 I was required to visit my local draft office and register for the military. I filled out a form and signed the line to apply for Conscientious Objector status. I had no prior knowledge of how to apply for such status, but when I saw the form I knew instinctively that I was doing the right thing. It was as if I was born to pacifism and peacemaking.

What followed were weeks of research and interviews with many different people in my attempt to understand how to obtain my CO status. I reached out to my rabbi, who did not agree with me and brushed me aside. However, I contacted the Jewish Peace Fellowship, which led me to Rabbi Michael Robinson, however, and he sent me important literature. I also visited the local American Friends Service Center (Quakers), who offered me some insights.

What I didn't realize at the time was that there was much in my upbringing that had led me to my decision to say "No" to war. My Jewish education was filled with numerous examples of the search for peace, and my mother was raised by a man committed to pacifism in a world filled with turmoil.

In addition, there were important events that had a huge effect on my life and the decisions I eventually made. Let me mention one of them:

I was born on March 10, 1945, in Los Angeles. I attended Columbia University as a graduate student, and received a Fulbright scholarship to study in Japan. I spent two years living in the mountains there, and learned to speak the language. I made friends, many with whom I'm still in touch.

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



1945. Tokyo burns under a B-29 firebomb assault.

Recently, I entered my birth date into Google to see what had happened in the world on the day I was born. A sunny California day, I wondered? What came up was shattering:

*On the night of 9–10 March (“Operation Meetinghouse”), 334 B-29s took off . . . with 279 of them dropping 1,665 tons of bombs on Tokyo. The bombs were mostly the 500-pound cluster bombs which released 38 napalm-carrying bombs. In the first two hours of the raid, 226 of the attacking aircraft unloaded their bombs to overwhelm the city’s fire defenses. Approximately 15.8 square miles of the city was destroyed and some 100,000 people are*

*estimated to have died.*

Those who lived had to bury the dead, survive in a devastated city with very little to eat, and cope with black rain that fell for days. The raid had been designed to “soften” the enemy for what would follow in August 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The historian John W. Dower has written that a military aide to General Douglas MacArthur described the American firebombing of Tokyo as “one of the most ruthless and barbaric killings of non-combatants in all history.” It is hard to disagree.

When I applied for a CO classification on the Selective Service form, I of course had no idea what had happened on the day of my birth. But I believe that somehow, in some way, an event of that magnitude played a role in my life and the direction it has taken.

*Kindly note: SHALOM’s editors are taking a break during July and August. Our next issue will appear in September. Here’s wishing that your summer is refreshing. ✧*

Gareth Porter

## Why Iran Must Remain an Enemy

**S**INCE THE START of the US nuclear negotiations with Iran, both Israeli and Saudi officials have indulged in highly publicized handwringing over their belief that such a nuclear deal would represent a fundamental strategic shift in US policy towards the region at the expense of its traditional alliances with Israel and Saudi Arabia.

But the Obama administration is no more likely to lurch into a new relationship with Iran than were previous US administrations. The reason is very simple: The US national security state, which has the power to block any such initiative, has fundamental long-term interests in continuing the policy of treating Iran as an enemy.

Some in the Israeli camp have spun elaborate theories about how the Obama administration's negotiations with Iran represent a strategic vision of partnership with the Iranian regime.

Typical of the genre is former Bush administration official Michael Doran's speculation in February that President Obama based his policy of outreach to Tehran on the assumption that Tehran and Washington are "natural allies."

The Saudi response to the negotiations has been, if anything, even more extreme. Prince Turki al-Faisal, the former head of Saudi intelligence, who speaks more candidly in public than any other Saudi public figure, told an audience at London's Chatham House last month, "The Americans and Iranians have been flirting with each other. Now it seems each side is anxious to get over the flirtation and get to the

consummation."

Behind the sexual metaphor lie Saudi fears of a "grand bargain" under which Iran would forgo nuclear weapons in return for ratification of Iranian hegemony over Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and the Gulf.

But these Israeli and Saudi imaginings are divorced from the reality of the Obama administration's actual Iran policy.



*'It seems each side is anxious to get over the flirtation and get to the consummation.'* Prince Turki Al Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (left) and Senator John McCain (right) at the 50th Munich Security Conference, February 2, 2014.

Far from the Nixon-like fundamental strategic revision, as the Netanyahu camp and the Saudis have suggested, the Obama administration's diplomatic engagement with Iran over its nuclear program represents a culmination of a series of improvised policy adjustments within an overall framework of coercive diplomacy towards Iran.

Despite Obama's embrace of diplomatic engagement with Iran as a campaign issue in 2008 when he entered the White House, his real Iran policy was quite

different. In fact, Obama's aim during his first term was to induce Iran to accept an end to its uranium enrichment program.

Even as Obama was offering "unconditional talks" with Iran in a letter to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in 2009, he was already pursuing a strategy of multiple pressures on Iran to agree to that US demand.

Obama's strategy of coercive diplomacy involved plans for more intrusive and punishing economic sanctions, a secret NSA program of cyber-attacks against the Natanz enrichment facility, and political/diplomatic exploitation of the threat of an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities by the Netanyahu government in Israel.

Obama made no serious effort to negotiate with Iran un-

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til 2012, when he believed the new sanctions that were about to take effect would force Iran to agree to suspend enrichment indefinitely. He dropped that demand in 2013, only because Iran had increased the number of centrifuges in operation from four thousand to ten thousand and had begun enriching to twenty percent.

Since the beginning of the negotiations, moreover, senior administration officials have repeatedly affirmed the policy of treating Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism and a “troublemaker” and destabilising factor in the Middle East.

In his April 7 interview with National Public Radio, Obama said, “I’ve been very forceful in saying that our differences with Iran don’t change if we make sure that they don’t have a nuclear weapon — they’re still going to be financing Hezbollah, they’re still supporting Assad dropping barrel bombs on children, they are still sending arms to the Houthis in Yemen that have helped destabilise the country.”

At a deeper level, the most important factor in determining the policy of the US towards Iran is domestic electoral and bureaucratic politics — not Obama’s personal geopolitical vision of the Middle East. The power of the Israeli lobby will obviously severely limit policy flexibility towards Iran for many years. And the interests of the most powerful institutions in the US national security state remain tied to a continuation of the policy of treat-

ing Iran as the premier enemy of the US.

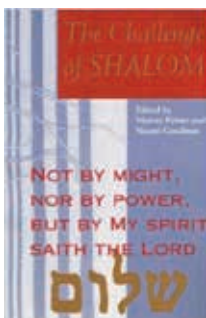
Since 2002 the US Department of Defense has spent roughly \$100 billion on missile defense, most of which goes directly to its major military contractor allies. That bonanza depends largely on the idea that Iran is intent on threatening the US and its allies with ballistic missiles.

But an even bigger bonanza for the US arms industry is at stake. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf regimes in the anti-Iran alliance have been pouring big money into Pentagon arms contractor coffers for years. A deal with Saudi Arabia for fighter planes and missile defense technology first announced in 2010 was expected to yield \$100-150 billion in procurement and service contracts over two decades. And that tsunami of money from the Gulf depends on identifying Iran as a military threat to the entire region.

These sales are now integral to the health of the leading US military contractors. Lockheed, for example, now depends on foreign sales for as much as twenty-five to thirty-three percent of its revenue, according to a *New York Times* report.

So the Israeli and Saudi fear of a supposed Obama shift in alliances doesn’t reflect fundamental domestic US political realities, which are not likely to change for the foreseeable future. ☆

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Lawrence S. Wittner

## Forty Years On

**F**ORTY YEARS after the American war in Vietnam ended in ignominious defeat, the traces of that terrible conflict are disappearing.

Traveling through Vietnam during the latter half of April 2015 with a group of erstwhile antiwar activists, I was struck by the transformation into a modern nation of what was once an impoverished, war-devastated peasant society. Its cities and towns are bustling with life and energy. Vast numbers of motorbikes surge through their streets, including 4.2 million in Hanoi and seven million in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon). A thriving commercial culture has emerged, based not only on many small shops, but on an influx of giant Western, Japanese, and other corporations. Although Vietnam is officially a Communist nation, about forty percent of the economy is capitalist, and the government is making great efforts to encourage private foreign investment. Indeed, over the past decade, Vietnam has enjoyed one of the highest economic growth rates in the world. Not only have manufacturing and tourism expanded dramatically, but Vietnam has become an agricultural powerhouse. Today it is the world's second largest exporter of rice, and one of the world's leading exporters of coffee, pepper, rubber, and other agricultural commodities. Another factor distancing the country from what the Vietnamese call "the American war" is the rapid increase in Vietnam's population. Only forty-one million in 1975, it now tops ninety million, with most of it under the age of thirty — too young to have any direct experience with the conflict.

Vietnam has also made a remarkable recovery in world affairs. It now has diplomatic relations with a hundred and eighty-nine countries, and enjoys good relations with all the major nations.

Nevertheless, the people of Vietnam paid a very heavy price for their independence from foreign domination. Some three million of them died in the American war, and another three hundred thousand are still classified as MIAs. In addition, many, many Vietnamese were wounded or crippled in the conflict. Perhaps the most striking long-term damage

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*Rush hour in Ho Chi Minh City.*

resulted from the US military's use of Agent Orange (dioxin) as a defoliant. Vietnamese officials estimate that, today, some four million of their people suffer the terrible effects of this chemical, which not only destroys the bodies of those exposed to it, but has led to horrible birth defects and developmental disabilities into the second and third generations. Much of Vietnam's land remains contaminated by Agent Orange, as well as by unexploded ordnance. Indeed, since the end of the American war in 1975, the landmines, shells, and bombs that continue to litter the nation's soil have wounded or killed over a hundred and five thousand Vietnamese — many of them children.

During the immediate postwar years, Vietnam's ruin was exacerbated by additional factors. These included a US government embargo on trade with Vietnam, US government efforts to isolate Vietnam diplomatically, and a 1979 Chinese military invasion of Vietnam employing six hundred thousand troops. Although the Vietnamese managed to expel the Chinese — just as they had previously routed the French and the Americans — China continued border skirmishes with Vietnam until 1988. In addition, during the first postwar decade, the ruling Vietnamese Communist Party pursued a hardline, repressive policy that undermined what was left of the economy and alienated much of the population. Misery and starvation were widespread.





*Nighttime in Ho Chi Minh City: A view from Bitexco Financial Tower.*

Nevertheless, starting in the mid-1980s, the country made a remarkable comeback. This recovery was facilitated by Communist Party reformers who loosened the reins of power, encouraged foreign investment, and worked at developing a friendlier relationship with other nations, especially the US. In 1995, the US and Vietnamese governments resumed diplomatic relations. Although these changes did not provide a panacea for the nation's ills — for example, the US State Department informed the new US ambassador that he must never mention Agent Orange — Vietnam's circumstances, and particularly its relationship with the US, gradually improved. US-Vietnamese trade expanded substantially, reaching \$35 billion in 2014. Thousands of Vietnamese students participated in educational exchanges. In recent years, the US government even began funding programs to help clean up Agent Orange contamination and unexploded ordnance.

Although, in part, this US-Vietnamese détente resulted from the growing flexibility of officials in both nations, recently it has also reflected the apprehension of both governments about the increasingly assertive posture of China in Asian affairs. Worried about China's unilateral occupation of uninhabited islands in the South China Sea during 2014, both governments began to resist it — the US through its “Pacific pivot,” and Vietnam through an ever closer re-

lationship with the US to “balance” China. Although both nations officially support the settlement of the conflict over the disputed islands through diplomacy centered on the ten countries that comprise the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, officials in Vietnam, increasingly nervous about China's ambitions, appear to welcome the growth of a more powerful US military presence in the region. In the context of this emerging agreement on regional security, Secretary of State John Kerry, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter, and President Obama will be visiting Vietnam later this year.

This shift from warring enemies to cooperative partners over the past forty years should lead to solemn reflection. In the Vietnam War, the US government laid waste to a poor peasant nation in an effort to prevent the triumph of a Communist revolution that US policymakers insisted would release a Red tide that would sweep through Asia and imperil the US. And yet, when America's counterrevolutionary effort collapsed, this dire prediction was proved false. Instead, an independent nation emerged that could — and did — work amicably with the US government. This development highlights the unnecessary nature — indeed, the tragedy — of America's vastly destructive war in Vietnam. It also underscores the deeper folly of relying on war to cope with international issues. ☆

## Murray Polner

# Remembering the Dead

**I USED TO COMMUTE** to work by rail with a neighbor. One day I learned that we were both veterans: I, a Korean War draftee, and he, an officer in the Vietnam War. One of his military jobs was, to say the least, a bit unusual. For a time he was assigned to visit families of the dead to inform them that their husband, son, grandson, nephew had been killed in the war.

I was stunned. I wondered how it affected him then and now. Does he still hear their cries? Did he ever try to contact some of them? I remember turning to him, asking for more, please. “No, I’m sorry I told you, forget it,” he said, not unkindly. But not before he added a final word. He’d never allow his two sons to join the military.

I remember others, too, who died in war. In our earlier “good war,” Irving Starr, whose family owned the delicatessen in the house adjoining our four-family apartment, was killed during a raid over Romania’s Ploesti oil fields. Buddy, his younger brother, told me that insofar as he knew, Irv’s body was never recovered.

I learned about Phil Drazin’s death while playing punch ball on the street next to his father’s grocery store. When his father received the news, I watched in fear as his father ran out of his store on Straus Street and Lott Avenue, crying, yes, crying, and I thought I had never seen a grown man cry in public. “Maybe it’s a mistake, maybe it’s a mistake,” he kept shouting.

I wish I could remember the name or face of the eighteen- or nineteen-year-old boy whose family had recently moved into an adjoining apartment just before he received

his draft notice. I do remember that on one especially humid, hot summer weekday afternoon I watched from our second-floor window as his father stumbled toward an apartment bench and began sobbing. My mother, who was standing next to me, was very good about such things. She ran down to the street and embraced the father while he was still wailing. She then gently led this heartbroken stranger whom none of us knew to his equally devastated wife. My mother then

returned to our apartment, her eyes wet with tears at what she had just witnessed, and told me she was glad I was still too young to go to war.

My boyhood pal Porky was drafted and never returned from the Korean War. The laconic and pleasant Trinchintella boy, who worked at his family’s neighborhood gas station, was trained as a Vietnam War helicopter gunner. Gravely wounded, he died in a military hospital in Japan, his traumatized

parents seated helplessly in an empty corridor, waiting. An uncle told me that the family would never again speak about their son’s death.

I remember an African American former student, Ronald Boston, shy, unathletic, a kid who tried hard to earn good grades and was drafted during Vietnam. Ironically, his mother worked in a nursing home and tended to my mother, who was stricken with Alzheimer’s disease. One day Ronald’s mother told me about a dream in which her son had been killed in Vietnam. Poor Mrs. Boston. Poor Ronald. He never did make it home except in a flag-covered casket. Years later I received an e-mail from Cathy R. Boston, Ronald’s sister, telling me her niece had found my recollection of Ronald on the Internet. She wrote me: “So I decided to write you a



*D-Day, 1945: The American Cemetery and Memorial, in Hamm, Luxembourg City, Luxembourg.*

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short email to say thank you for writing and remembering. My Mom and Dad never recovered. In fact, the family never recovered from Ronnie's death. The subsequent 'wars' have been protested in this household and will continue to be protested, Please do not give up the fight as I have not."

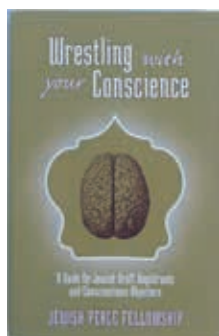
I've forgotten the source but I also remember reading a small item about a mother in New York State, mourning her soldier son's death in Iraq. What's it about, she asked? "Is it about oil? I don't know what this war is for. We don't want anyone else to die in this useless stupid war."

It's hard to keep an accurate count of all the wars, large and small, this country has fought and lost since 1945. Convincing parents to send their young men and women to war is a relatively simple matter. Flags will wave, bumper stickers will urge us to "support our troops," stay-at-home pundits

will approve, and support in polls will rise, at least until the dead and badly wounded start trickling home. Herman Goring was among the worst of the worse, but he came pretty close to understanding how governments manipulate people. "It is always a simple matter to drag people along," he said while awaiting his trial in Nuremberg. "All you have to do is tell them that they're being attacked and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

Even war lovers like Theodore Roosevelt and Rudyard Kipling changed their tunes once their sons died in the First World War. Kipling tried to assuage his guilt and grief in this shattering couplet:

*If any question why we died  
Tell them, because our fathers lied. ☆*



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Patrick Henry

## From Rescuing Jews to Building Bridges for Peace

### *Two Films from Lisa Gossels*

**I**N 1999, LISA GOSSELS released her first full-length film, *The Children of Chabannes*, which relates the moving story of the four hundred, mostly foreign Jewish children ranging in age from two to seventeen who, between 1939-1943, were sheltered from the Nazis and the Vichy police in Chabannes, a small agricultural village in La Creuse in central France. Two of these children were the filmmaker's father, Peter Gossels, and her uncle, Werner.

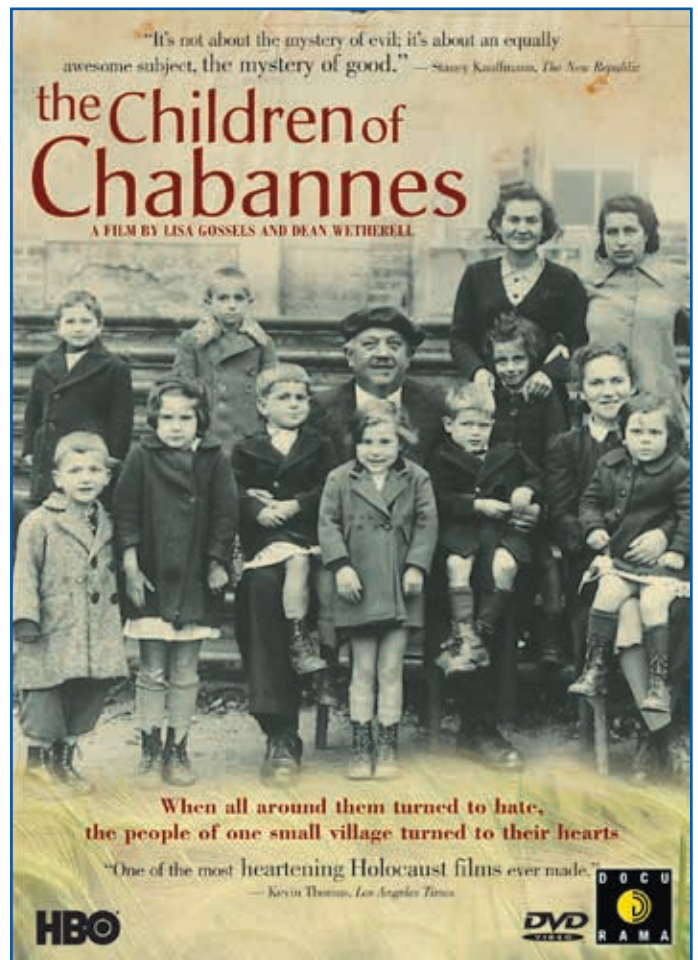
Like other award-winning documentaries about the rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust, such as *Weapons of the Spirit* and *The Courage to Care*, Lisa Gossels's work intertwines archival materials and oral historical accounts of interviews with the rescuers, the rescued, and those who lived in the area at that time. It succeeds brilliantly in giving us a sense of the life these children had, the courage and convictions of those who sheltered them, and the deep feelings of love and mutual affection between the rescued and the rescuers that have lasted more than half a century.

Unlike a good deal of the rescue work done in France (primarily by Catholics in Lyon, Nice, and Toulouse, and Protestants on the Plateau Vivarais-Lignon and in the Cévennes), what happened in Chabannes was not religiously inspired. The people interviewed in the film make this point repeatedly. They define themselves as *laïcs, républicains*, people who believed in "the Rights of Man," secular children of the Enlightenment, who steadfastly rejected the anti-Semitism promulgated by the Vichy government. The film focuses in particular on Reine and Renée Paillassou, two dedicated teachers who integrated the children into the local school, and on Félix Chevrier, who headed this rescue effort and wanted to save the children, "not because they were Jewish but because they were children."

*The Children of Chabannes* also stresses the tremendous role played by the *Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants* (OSE; Chil-

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**PATRICK HENRY** is the author of *We Only Know Men: The Rescue of Jews in France during the Holocaust* (Catholic University of America Press, 2007); editor of *Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis* (Catholic University of America Press, 2014), and a contributing editor to *SHALOM*.



dren's Rescue Network) in the rescue of Jewish children. Two members of this Jewish organization, Georges Loinger and Rachel Pludermacher, forced the children to stay in excellent shape, helped them settle in the village, counseled them and, with dances, plays, and orchestra work, tried to give them as normal a life as possible under the circumstances. After it became clear that Jews were no longer safe anywhere in France, the children were dispersed, hidden in private homes and farms, or smuggled into Switzerland.

Gossels' film offers an example of the "banality of good-

ness,” where kindness towards strangers spread in unforeseeable ways, and Jews and non-Jews worked together to shelter expatriated children. In 1999, *The Children of Chabannes* was voted Best Feature Film (Audience Award) at the Nantucket Film Festival; the Special Jury Prize for Best Feature Film at the Avignon Film Festival, and among others, Best Documentary Film at the Hollywood Film Festival and at the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival. After airing on HBO Signature in 2001, it received an Emmy award for “Outstanding Historical Programming,” an award presented to Ms. Gossels by Elie Wiesel.

It is not at all uncommon to discover films and books about rescue during the Holocaust composed by those who were themselves rescued or by the children of those who were rescued. This is the case here as it is for another major French rescuer film, Pierre Sauvage’s *Weapons of the Spirit*, and for the written works of Eva Fogelman and Nechama Tec, to choose but three other famous examples. What is uncommon is for someone to write that book or make that film and then throw herself headfirst into peace activism. From *Chabannes* to *Israel/Palestine: That is the trajectory of Lisa Gossels’ two major films to date.*

In 2002, twenty-two Palestinian, Israeli, and Israeli-Palestinian teenage girls (Muslims, Jews, and Christians) traveled to the US to participate in a ten-day women’s leadership program, Building Bridges for Peace, in Bridgeton, New Jersey. It is a program designed to build relationships, gain communication and leadership skills, empower women, and enable them to create more just, inclusive societies. In the process, these young women got to know their “enemies” as human beings and, as we discover, this experience has enriched and changed their lives ever since.

The program is not about agreeing with one another. It’s about honoring each other by listening to one another, creating a comfortable space for expressing all points of view, and

talking to one another honestly. It aims at breaking down learned assumptions and stereotypes, creating tolerance, and demonstrating nonviolent means of conflict resolution. These young people ask difficult questions, do a lot of role-playing, study reactions, theirs and those of others, and try to understand how “the others” feel about the issues in question.

There are many psychological projects as well. They actually build things together in groups, bowl together in teams, watch films and dance together, swim together, and learn to trust one another. It’s all about getting to know and respect one another, to embrace the humanity in others, and to make friends with one’s so-called “enemy.”

Gossels’s award winning *My So-Called Enemy* is a coming of age story about six of the program’s participants, Adi (Israeli, Jewish), Gal (Israeli, Jewish), Hanin (Palestinian-Israeli, Muslim), Inas (Palestinian, Christian), Rawan (Palestinian, Muslim), and Rezan (Palestinian, Christian), and how, over the next seven years, they reconcile their transformative experience in the program with the realities of life back home in the Middle East. Melodye, the founder of Bridges for Peace, tells them as they leave the program, “If a bomb goes off, if a tank comes into your village, pick up the phone and call one another.” She wants them to realize that the friendships they created are real, no matter what people tell them when they go home. What they returned to in 2002 was the most violent period of the Second Intifada, which ultimately would claim the lives of fifty-five hundred Palestinians and a thousand Israelis. Fifteen months later, the girls were finishing high school, working, starting college, or going into the military.

It was difficult for them to talk about their experience with their families and friends who, in large measure, simply didn’t understand and, generally speaking, still lived according to established stereotypes. Some participants felt isolated in their new understanding; their lives were more nuanced

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### Peace, Justice and Jews: Reclaiming Our Tradition

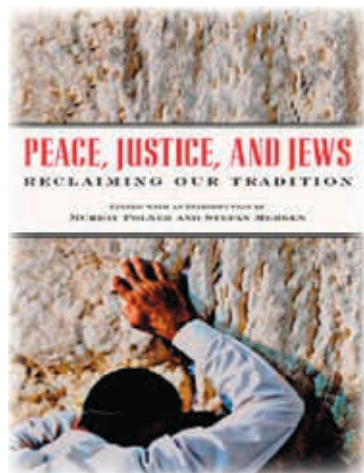
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*Publishers Weekly* called it “literate, thought-provoking” and “by no means homogeneous” and which looked at “from all angles, the idea that editors Polner and Merken believe reflect the most basic attitude in our Jewish heritage.”

*Publishers Weekly* concluded: “There is much to learn here for anyone, Jew or Gentile, interested in global issues of peace and justice.”

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*“Be the change you wish to see in the world”: Six young participants in Bridges for Peace.*

now, more complex, more difficult. But they stayed in touch with one another, by cell phone, when possible, and by texting.

Over the seven year span of the movie, all the women would agree that they had changed because of the experience. Hanin claims that working in Haifa, a city of co-existence in Northern Israel, made her feel for the first time that “We [are] all the same.” Inas, who lost her father and her mentor because of the Second Intifada, now sees Israelis as her friends. Rezan, who lives in East Jerusalem, is able to see “her enemy” as her best friend. “My best friend is Gal... For me, that’s everything... A feeling that sometimes makes me cry at night, thinking about it.” Gal, who was raised in an Orthodox home, says that Building Bridges made her “question everything [she] believed in. Her decision to join the Israeli Army (IDF) is agonizing for her. “My friendship with Rezan is one of the most important things for me in the world and I’m afraid that something like the army is going to conquer it... I’m going to the enemy’s army. I’m going to wear this uniform every day, the same uniform she sees at every checkpoint. I think it’s too big. I think it’s too big for us. Even though she is the most amazing person I know.”

Two years later, in October 2005, as Gaza was evacuated and a four hundred and fifty-mile wall was built separating Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories, these young women were still texting and demonstrating trust and concern for one another. Adi was also doing her compulsory service in the IDF; Inas was studying in Chicago, and Rawan was getting a master’s degree in social work. In 2008, when the rockets started coming from Gaza and an Israeli incursion claimed fourteen hundred Palestinian lives and left much of the population without food and medical supplies, the young women remained close and even hope-

ful that peace was still a possibility. Hanin claims that she no longer believes in violence. Adi notes that the wall has lessened the violence but “if you have a wall, you can’t see each other.” Inas asserts that “In Building Bridges, there are angels around us that spread peace in our hearts.” Rezan affirms that “Gal is family now. She’s the one behind the wall. It makes me even more eager to bring it down, to get to her.”

The film ends with Gal and Rezan at the wall, a wall separating Jerusalem from the Palestinian areas, but a wall unable to destroy what these young persons have created. Gal and Rezan write Gandhi’s wisdom on that wall: “Be the change you wish to see in the world,” a wisdom exemplified in our six young bridge builders. Then Rezan affirms: “Peace is possible. Everything has a solution in the end. It’s not going to go on like this forever.”

**LISA GOSSELS** is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Brown University, with a degree in Literature and Society; a graduate of New York University’s Film Certificate Program, an internationally recognized filmmaker, and president of Good Egg Productions, in Manhattan. She became a documentarian because she believes in the power of film to effect social change. “If I weren’t a filmmaker,” she tells me, “I’d be a teacher.” Lisa does a lot of traveling with *The Children of Chabannes* and *My So-Called Enemy*. She loves speaking and teaching at high schools, universities, and religious institutions, and using her films to engage young people and adults in dialogue across differences, in both secular and faith-centered communities. “I make films to inspire and empower,” she says, “and to give voice to individuals who are not often heard in the mainstream news media.”

*My So-Called Enemy* is an emotionally charged, narrative-shaking film, at once illuminating, provocative, yet balanced about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the possibilities of building bridges and overcoming long-standing obstacles between ourselves and others. “One of its main messages,” its author tells me, “is that we are all human and all of us need the same basics: food, shelter, security, education, healthcare, dignity, hope, and love.” Her film posits the vital role of women in peacemaking and demonstrates how creating relationships across emotional, ideological, and physical borders is the first step towards resolving conflict.

Both of Gossels’s inspirational films speak to the best in us and encourage us as individuals to make a difference in our world. They stimulate our moral imagination and let us know unequivocally that there can never be peace or justice without the recognition and celebration of the humanity of all others. ☆



Jerry Haber

## ‘Tikun Olam-Washing’ in Israel?

**D**R. MAX KLAU and Rabbi Sid Schwartz (a rabbi for whom I have enormous respect) have written an article arguing that young progressive Jews who are alienated from Israel can become connected via service learning programs, like those run by an organization called Yahel. These are programs that bring young people to Israel to do volunteer work with Sephardic, Ethiopian and Druze communities. According to the authors, the Yahel experience is

an experience that provides a realistic, complex and nuanced understanding of a country that is talked about largely in the abstract during polarized debates back on college campuses in the States. And along with that nuanced and complex understanding emerges a genuine sense of connection.

The authors follow the story of “Jennifer,” who was raised in a home that “equated Zionism with racism. Like many secular, progressive young Americans, she spent her college years immersed in a campus culture that, at best, questioned the current policies of the state of Israel and, at worst, demonized the country as a pariah state.” But after working with Ethiopians in the Ramat Eliyahu neighborhood of Rishon Le-Tziyyon, Jennifer feels much more connected to Israel. “Through her service, she is encountering issues of race, gender, economic justice, immigration, and — of course — the conflict with Palestinians — as they are experienced every day in Ramat Eliyahu and beyond.”

Yes, she is — and that is the problem. Because in the Ramat Eliyahu neighborhood of Rishon, she will never observe the daily lives of Palestinians under Israeli control. She will not encounter Palestinians, *except in terms of the “conflict.”* Jennifer will learn more about what it is to live under Occupation by attending campus meetings of Students for Justice in Palestine and J Street U in the US, than she will in an Israeli town that gave thirty per cent of its vote to the



*A view in the Ramat Eliyahu neighborhood of Rishon LeZion.*

Likud, and almost as many votes to the racist Yahad party as to Meretz (three percent). She will be closer to the West Bank experience in Ann Arbor than she will be in Rishon.

A look at Yahel’s website shows that none of the programs work with Palestinian Israelis, much less with Palestinians under occupation. This is social justice “within the family.” It is not social justice for the most underprivileged group of Israeli citizens, Palestinian Israelis.

Of course, working with all underprivileged is important, and I am the first to applaud Yahel and other programs for doing that. I am not for dissing social justice programs of any sort. Just as justice should be blind, so, too, should social justice.

But service learning programs in Israel will not further young progressive students’ understanding of the core human rights/social justice issue in Israel today: the treatment of the Palestinians under Occupation. To me, it’s like telling college students during the civil rights era, “Don’t demonize the South; go and tutor its poor white children.”

Israel is constantly thinking of ways to engage liberal Jews in order to divert their attention from the elephant in the room. Progressive Jews have an obligation to see what is being done in their name in Areas B and C. If they can’t

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visit Gaza, they should learn about the lives of Gazans, who remain under Israel's effective control.

Service learning should not be “*tikun olam* washing” —

a way of connecting with progressives while sweeping under the carpet the central problem facing Israel and its supporters today. ✧

## ‘A Literary Radical’

# Michael True

## War Is (Still) the Health of the State

Dorothy Day was, among other things, a skilled interviewer, as I learned sitting next to her as she questioned a dock worker over lunch at St. Joseph's House of Hospitality. Within minutes, she evoked the story of the young union organizer and his vivid accounts of his experience at sea.

Similarly, when we first met on Christie Street in lower Manhattan in 1965, she soon found out that I had written about Randolph Bourne (1886-1918), the American social and literary critic, and invited me to speak about him on a Friday night at a Catholic Worker meeting, the first of many memorable visits. Dorothy and her anarchist-pacifist friend Ammon Hennacy often quoted Bourne's famous epigram, “War is the Health of the State,” in their *Catholic Worker* articles. In 1914, Ammon, while still a student, had provided hospitality to Bourne when he spoke at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

While conducting research on Bourne at Duke University library in 1960, I was surprised to come across a bibliographical listing, *The Book of Ammon: Autobiography of a Catholic Anarchist* (1952), in a dissertation by the novelist Mark Harris. My Catholic educa-



‘War is the health of the State’: Randolph Bourne.

tion had never before connected me with anything like anarchism and pacifism. Learning about Ammon was to have serious implications not only for my postgraduate education, but also for the rest of my life.

A member of the Socialist Party in 1917, Ammon was initially jailed in Ohio for refusing induction into the army. Dorothy Day was then a secretary for *The Liberator* magazine in New York City. After the prison served spoiled fish to inmates in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, he led a strike of inmates and was punished with solitary confinement. A moving account in his *The Book of Ammon* tells how seeing the bald head of the anarchist, Alexander Berkman — Berkman was in prison after his attempt to kill Henry Clay Frick, who violently suppressed a steel strike in which nine workers were killed — gave him the courage to “keep on keeping on.” While in solitary, Ammon had sharpened a spoon and contemplated suicide; but he started reading the Bible (the only book to which he had access) and converted to Christianity. Not long after Ammon's imprisonment, Eugene Debs ended up in the same prison for opposing the draft and American entry into World War I. Bourne's fellow critics of Woodrow Wilson's declaration of war and introduction of the draft included Dorothy Day's compatriots at *The Masses*

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and *The Liberator*, two lively socialist magazines. Years later, Dorothy spoke of her indebtedness to Debs at his gravesite in Terre Haute, Indiana, when she received the annual Eugene Victor Debs Award.

**RANDOLPH BOURNE** never went to prison but reached the same conclusions. Raised in a culture that so easily accepts war, many Americans find it difficult to confront and challenge extreme nationalism and propaganda as acutely as Bourne did in 1916-18. The war fever that infuriated him is only too familiar today after Vietnam and Iraq, and especially the complicity of intellectuals and supposed foreign policy professionals who not only tolerate such fever, but as he wrote, embrace it as their own.

Appalled by their willingness “to open these sluice gates and flood us with the sewage of the war spirit,” Bourne accused intellectuals of guiding the nation “through sheer force of ideas” into what other nations “entered only through predatory craft and popular hysteria or military madness.” In his critique of the war spirit, Bourne offered an alternative vision inspired by Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau and Mark Twain. Twain, a fierce critic of the U.S. during the Spanish American and U.S.-Philippine wars, served as vice-president of the Anti-Imperialist League until his death in 1910. Faithful to values he embraced as a social and literary critic, Bourne fulfilled the responsibility of a man of letters, which Dorothy Day’s friend and, later, my teacher, Allen Tate, described as exposing “the staggering abuses of language and thus of choices” that invalidate a democratic culture.

My research about Bourne led me to appreciate the richness of the period prior to the First World War, including the birth of Modernism, which influenced Ammon’s and Dorothy’s education and experience. Bourne, Ammon, and Dorothy remain closely connected in my experience; and I remain particularly grateful for Bourne’s essays, especially “History of a Literary Radical,” which describes a person whose values strongly resembled Ammon’s and Dorothy’s, as well as “War and the Intellectuals.” They are as essential to an understanding of American culture now as they were when they were published almost a century ago. Bourne reflected the influence of his mentors, the philosophers John Dewey and William James, and his literary friendship with the critic and historian Van Wyck Brooks.

Born in 1886 in Brookfield, New Jersey, Bourne worked in a piano factory before entering Columbia University. After graduation he began writing and publishing in national periodicals. As American involvement approached, he experienced the betrayal of intellectuals, including John Dewey, who embraced the entrance into the war, “that senseless slaughter,” as Ernest Hemingway rightly called it.

After Congress passed the Espionage Act in 1917, which is still on the books, thousands of antiwar, antidraft leftists were arrested, including conscientious objectors and draft resisters, some of whom died in prison. Irish and German-Americans were harassed. In 1919, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who had organized the Anti-Conscription League in New York City, and about one hundred and forty other radicals were exiled at the instigation of J. Edgar Hoover.

Bourne’s stance against the war followed his return from a Watson Fellowship in Europe in 1913-14, an experience which gave him a particularly vivid sense of Western Europe at that time. Soon after returning home he began challenging all the conventional justifications for war. That included a famous public debate with Dewey in *The New Republic*, where Bourne was education editor. Dropped from his editorship when he persisted in criticizing “the war spirit,” he continued to write for various little magazines of the early Modernist movement. Felled by illness during the flu epidemic, he died in 1918, at age thirty-two. Shortly afterward, Scofield Thayer published an essay about him in “The History of a Literary Radical” in the first issue of *Dial* magazine. By then, Bourne had become a symbolic figure and hero among many artists and intellectuals, including Theodore Dreiser and John Dos Passos.

Today, Randolph Bourne is cited by many critics of American foreign policy. His essays remain a touchstone for recent writers who speak cynically about the betrayal of public intellectuals who “go along to get along” with those in power. In “War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning” and “What Every Person Should Know About War,” Chris Hedgess’s indictments of war echo Bourne’s: “War is brutal and impersonal” and “mocks the fantasy of individual heroism.”

Randolph Bourne remains the literary radical peculiar to the early twentieth century, as well as the literary radical of every age who helps us define our personal responsibility whenever our country decides to go to war again. ☆

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