

# SHALOM

*Jewish Peace Letter*

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*Tahrir Square, Cairo, July 15, 2011*

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## Stefan Merken

**It is not what we do, but also what we do not do, for which we are accountable.**

*Molière, actor and playwright (1622-1673)*

**T**HE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS HAVE BEEN A POLITICAL roller coaster for many of us. The debt and unemployment crises (not to mention our endless wars) and the inability to compromise has been an eye-opener for me, as I am sure it has for many of you. I expected, and perhaps I'm mistaken, that most elected officials would make laws that care for the average American and especially for those who are aging or need more assistance. It doesn't appear that many elected officials feel this way. Indeed, our safety net for the most vulnerable among us is now threatened.

Through all the political arguments and disagreements, I did nothing to try to influence the course of events. I was home in Seattle, passively awaiting the outcome of the battle in Washington, D.C. I neither picked up the phone nor sat down at my computer to write a letter. I wonder now why I was so quiet.

Whose fight is this anyway? It is yours and mine! Being believers in the power of nonviolence, we need to make our voices heard more than most. We need to let others know that we believe in humane solutions. It doesn't take much time to sit down and write to an elected official. I'll bet members of the Tea Party wrote plenty of letters to make their views known.

As far back as I can remember I have been outspoken on issues I believe are important. This has gotten me into trouble more than once. What all this has accomplished I can't say. In some cases, as soon as I have expressed my feelings, there

is a chill in the conversation and a change in the subject matter. I'm sure my views have alienated some. But in the end, I have made new friends and found like-minded people.

At a dinner party recently, the main conversation shifted from daily events in Seattle to the national economy. I said very little until someone criticized the supposed drain on the American taxpayers as a result of federal funding of organizations such as Planned Parenthood. That set me off. I mentioned our three wars and the enormous amount of taxpayer money they cost. My rejoinder was met by silence until a fellow on the opposite side of the table spoke up. Unhappy with the Iraq War and frustrated that President Obama has not taken the lead in getting us out of Afghanistan, his face turned crimson while talking about our latest involvement in Libya and the money being spent there.

As the dinner party wound down I spoke briefly with him. He had been a Conscientious Objector during the Vietnam War. He had had very little contact with any peace organizations since, but remained critically aware of national issues. I mentioned SHALOM/JPF and several other Web sites to visit, and he thanked me for speaking up.

So please keep in mind that even a simple letter to the editor of a newspaper or to an on-line magazine is never a waste of time. Then copy the letter to fifteen or twenty friends and ask them to do the same. And while you're at it, send them a link to SHALOM, too. Being part of the SHALOM community is a great beginning. We just need to widen the circle a bit more. ☆

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## SHALOM *Jewish Peace Letter*

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*Signed articles are the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the JPF.*

Elaine Durbach

# Israel and the Arab Spring

## *A High Holy Day Dream*

**I**HAVE A DREAM. IT'S NOT A VISION LIKE DR. MARTIN Luther King Jr.'s, but a longing for something that could be. Thinking about his August 28, 1963, "I have a dream" speech, and contemplating the great visions of the Jewish High Holy Days — of liberation and loyalty to great ideals — I found myself thinking, "What if..."

What if, as we give thanks for the liberation sixty-six years ago and all the triumphs of survival that came before that, we look beyond our perpetual concern with anti-Semitism and anti-Israel antagonism, and focus instead on the fruits of freedom, on all that Israel and its supporters have to offer in 2011?

What if, instead of standing so warily on the sidelines of the burgeoning struggle for liberation in the surrounding Arab states, Israel steps forward presenting itself as a regional leader?

What if, instead of worrying about what happens when the crooked dictator we know gets replaced by a zealot we don't know, we offer a hand of fellowship to a potential leader who shares the Jewish values we recommit to each fall?

What if, instead of fearing that liberated Arabs will hate us more than their corrupt, oppressive old leaders did, we hold up a new possibility: that Muslim and Jew can be partners in the struggle to establish prosperous, egalitarian democracies?

This isn't to claim that wariness and fear are unjustified.

*ELAINE DURBACH is a Zimbabwean-born journalist who has been writing for Jewish and secular publications for thirty-eight years. She is currently writing a novel.*

Radical Islam declares itself our enemy, and a power vacuum could provide an entry for the fundamentalists it champions. I'm not suggesting Israel's leaders tear up agreements where they exist. But consider what we have been hearing so far from those who sought change in Tunisia and then Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Yemen, and now Syria.

Very few have been screaming for Jewish blood or sharia law. Most have been calling out for an end to corruption and oppression, and demanding free and fair elections, to have a say in the government of their countries and a fairer stake in their economies.

Isn't that what Israelis want too, as citizens of the pre-eminent democracy in the region? Isn't that what they — and we —

claim to stand for in the Middle East? Isn't that why no one is expecting Israel to catch fire as these other countries have — even when its people demonstrate for affordable housing and cheaper food because it already has so many of those great stabilizing qualities?

Israel's neighbors know this. Pessimists among us say that makes them jealous and resentful. And that attitude generates insecurity and antagonism. But what if we turn that around?

Instead of panicking about the Palestinians' claim to statehood and strategizing about how to counteract it, what if we champion that ambition and try — really try — to find a way to live with it?

Instead of obsessing about the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas and Hezbollah, what if we unilaterally, openly and enthusiastically focus instead on what Israel offers?



*Tahrir Square, Cairo. July 15, 2011.*



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Instead of hunkering down, girding our loins for the next onslaught against us, why don't we trumpet out loud what Israel can share with fledgling democracies? For all the violence and conflict there, the Palestinians — and now workers from all over the world — have shown how much they value the employment offered by Israeli companies. They have technology and infrastructure and global connections to offer, and if they offered attractive partnerships, there would be eager backers coming from all over the world with wide-open wallets. Think what Israelis achieved in Gaza, and how much was lost to the Palestinians when they withdrew.

Imagine if that could have been shared?

What if we mount a huge, global PR campaign to demonstrate our willingness to partner with those who share our commitment — to respect differences and diversity, to protect individual rights and to champion real freedom?

In the old days, our people escaped to the Promised Land. With great gifts bestowed on them, our ancestors claimed a mandate to show the world a better way to live. The citizens of a free and democratic State of Israel have a great role to play — not just in a dream, but in the extraordinary reality unfolding all around them right now. Can we help them claim it? ✨

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## Ofra Yeshua-Lyth

# A Year of Saying No

**I**T WAS AN ITEM IN THE ISRAELI DAILY NEWSPAPER *Haaretz* informing readers that the Attorney General's office asked the police to open an investigation against author and editor Ilana Hammerman that outraged some of us. Hammerman drew our attention when she had bravely published a detailed magazine article in May 2010 describing a trip to an Israeli beach in the company of three Palestinian girls.

According to Israeli law and Israeli military regulations, no resident of the occupied Palestinian lands is allowed into "Israel proper" without a special permit. Since 2000, permits are rarely issued, keeping Palestinians out of Israeli view and space. Palestinians also have an extremely hard time just moving within the West Bank between villages and towns. Israeli Jews, by contrast, are free to travel in and out of most of the

West Bank, and are politely waved through checkpoints by the friendly (to them) Israeli guards.

Hammerman decided she had had enough of this. Having heard that her young Palestinian acquaintances had



*Palestinians Aya and Yasmin in Tel Aviv. Photo by Ilana Hammerman.*

never had a chance to see the sea, just thirty miles west of their village, she promptly invited them to disguise themselves as Israelis (by dropping the traditional Mandil headscarf and dressing casually) and get into her small car. They joyfully cooperated, knowing full well that any suspicion at the checkpoint would land them and their families in trouble, and possibly in jail. Their reward was a

happy day of fun and recreation.

The published story touched many Israelis and aroused some heated discussions. An Israeli nationalist organization, the Legal Forum for the Land of Israel, urged the Attorney General's office to start a criminal investigation against the law-breaking writer. Many in the Zionist left and the peace movement expressed sympathy with Ilana but were quick to register reservations about this act of civil disobedience.

To some of us, however, it seemed that "doing an Ilana"

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*A second Hebrew-language edition of OFRA YESHUA-LYTH's book, A State of Mind — Why Israel Should Become Secular and Democratic, will be published in August by Maariv Publishing. An English version is not yet available.*

is exactly what we had longed to do. The action fully reflected our long-felt disgust with an Israeli legal system that discriminates against people according to their ethnic origins and religion.

“Preserving a Jewish State with a Jewish majority” has become an axiomatic notion in Israel and abroad. An absolute majority of Israeli Jews feel there is an obligation to turn a blind eye to all evil in order to facilitate this approach. However, as activists, we believed that for too long we had demonstrated, written and complained about the sorry state of mind Israelis have locked themselves into and now felt a need to do something new. We saw a chance to break away from this as Ilana Hammerman had done.

Motivated by the urgency of the direct threat to Hammerman, which could potentially lead to up to two years in prison, we decided to join her and follow her example. A group of twelve women, (eleven others plus Ilana) quickly organized. We soon found counterparts, courageous Palestinian women who were willing to make a political statement and were interested in joining a day trip outside their harsh, limited reality. They all knew the risk they were taking in case their identities were revealed, but could not have cared less. At the appointed day, we set off in six cars with twelve Israeli drivers and escorts, twelve Palestinian women, four children and one baby.

It was a beautiful adventure. The day started with much tension. There was always the chance that an overzealous checkpoint guard would ask for paperwork and spoil the plan. Fortunately this did not happen. Less than half an hour after we set off we were able to assemble in a state of euphoric joy. We made it. The unlawful laws were broken, and from then on it was just a question of finding a good beach and nice cafés and restaurants. Israeli cities have plenty of these.

The recreational aspect was indeed rewarding, but it was merely a byproduct. Our purpose was and still is to make a political point. We aimed to go public and open a debate. It soon became clear that the Israeli media was not willing to take much notice of our actions without further prompting. So we chose to buy an advertisement titled “We Do Not Obey:

Women in the Footsteps of Ilana Hammerman.”

After its publication, there were many reactions. Israeli TV followed the story on prime time, and our action has become the center of a heated public debate, prompting more women to join our group. In addition, hundreds signed petitions in support of our acts. We made several more trips: five to the beach, one to a zoo, and one to the Stalactite Cave

Nature Reserve. With generous donations we managed to publish more ads, which clearly and openly described our determination to challenge the Israeli legal system.

The law’s enforcers made their move in October 2010, after the second ad and TV prime-time exposure. Thirty women, who identified themselves and openly acknowledged their participation in the simple act of driving Palestinians to the beach or the zoo, were summoned for criminal investigation by the Jerusalem police. We were individually interrogated, photographed for the criminal album and our fingerprints were stored for the criminal data base. Every one of us agreed to the bail conditions. Ilana Hammerman alone was interrogated twice.

The inconvenience was trivial compared with what a Palestinian has to put up with in similar circumstances. At this time we have no idea whether the state will take further action and actually prosecute us, an act which will give us a perfect platform to denounce publicly the despicable status of non-Israeli, non-Jewish residents of this land. A trial against us is bound to become a perfect platform to speak against the military occupation of Palestine, against the settlement policy and the militarized and discriminatory nature of our society.

While Israeli officials, diplomats, academics and spin doctors raise alarms through the media and Jewish communities all over the world about a so-called “global delegitimization campaign against Israel,” we instead call on fellow Israelis to start cleaning up our act back home. We ask good, honest, liberal democratic Israelis to join us in refusing to comply with laws and regulations that deny basic human rights to our fellow humans. It is as simple as it sounds, and long overdue. ☆

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*Our group of middle-aged Jewish Israeli women openly defy Israeli “Entry Laws into the country” and smuggle Palestinian friends with their children into Israel for fun days at the beach, the zoo, and nature reserves.*

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**ILLUSTRATIONS:** 1, 3 • A Peaceful Place. Impressions from Tahrir Square July 15th. Posted on YouTube by lorenzkh (<http://www.youtube.com/user/lorenzkh>). 4 • Snapshots: A Camera Blog (<http://blog.camera.org>). 6 • Wikimedia Commons (<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Prison.jpg>). 8 • Wikimedia Commons: U.S. Navy photo by Photographer’s Mate 2nd Class Eli Jody Medellin ([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US\\_Navy\\_030308-N-6477M-058\\_Members\\_of\\_.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:US_Navy_030308-N-6477M-058_Members_of_.jpg)). 10: • Wikimedia Commons: By Undetermined U.S military photographer ([http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OperationHueCity1967\\_wounded.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:OperationHueCity1967_wounded.jpg)). 12: • Wikimedia Commons: Rozpravy Aventina; volume 6/1930-1931; issue 4; page 39. Digitized by Institute of Czech Literature; Czech Academy of Sciences ([http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/90/Georges\\_Duhamel\\_1930.jpg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/90/Georges_Duhamel_1930.jpg)).

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Phyllis B. Taylor

## The Assault

### *Justice and Mercy Behind Bars*

**“HOW ARE YOU? DO YOU NEED ANYTHING TODAY?”** I’ll be back to see you next week.” That was the last thing I remember until I saw the very worried look of the corrections officer who was standing next to me at the inmate’s door. I had asked him to open the cell door so I could speak to the middle-aged Jewish man I’ve been seeing since his arrest almost a year ago. The man was not agitated at all. His uppercut punch, which broke my nose, bruised my mouth and resulted in extensive swelling of my lips, came literally out of nowhere.

Before I went to the hospital the three biggest concerns I had were how my husband of forty-eight years would react, whether the inmate would be safe from the anger of staff and other inmates, and whether I should press charges. When the question of pressing charges was raised by the deputy warden, I first said I would not do so. She told me I really had to and to think about it while I was at the hospital. After thinking a lot about it and talking to people I really respect who know me and know prisons and jails, I decided to go through the legal process. Why? This short reflection is my response.

*PHYLLIS TAYLOR is a chaplain in the Philadelphia Prison System. In that capacity she is the chaplain for the seriously ill, those with complicated grief issues, the Jewish population (as well as some of the other smaller religious groups) and the person responsible for religious diets. She is also a chaplain for staff. Phyllis is involved in promoting palliative and hospice care in the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections as well as other correctional systems. She is a longtime board member of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.*



I believe in the concept of Restorative Justice. In Howard Zehr’s *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*, he defines it as “a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and put things as right as possible.” Zehr goes on to state that “re-

storative justice programs aim to: put decisions into the hands of those most affected by crime; make justice more healing and, ideally, more transformative, and reduce the likelihood of future offenses.”

Although many people who end up behind bars have some form of mental illness, that does not mean their actions have no consequences. This is true of the man who attacked me. He is a fifty-three-year-old

Russian Jewish man. In the past, he has been charged with harassment and, I found out after the attack, aggravated assaults. I am not aware that he hears voices, but he clearly has trouble with impulse control. As many people have told me, if he can hurt me, who serves as his advocate, he can hurt others — especially if he is not punished. Many people, both staff and inmates alike, argue that pressing charges helps them because it protects them.

One result of the attack has been a closer sense of solidarity with correctional officers. Though I went through the prison system’s training academy as a chaplain and have been available to staff as well as inmates, I now know more intimately what prison officers face every day. They are locked in with inmates whereas I go in and out of cell blocks as I make my rounds to see various men and women throughout the Philadelphia Prison System. If there is a disturbance I know to get out of the way; but they have to go in and quell the

trouble. They are always putting themselves in harm's way without the kind of recognition and appreciation police and firefighters ordinarily receive.

Throughout this experience I have been "loved up," as the expression goes. I have felt such support from correctional officers, social workers, other chaplains and, yes, inmates and ex-offenders. Every person has asked not only how I am but whether I am pressing charges. Every person has told me that they feel it is vital to press charges to safeguard themselves as well as to show that no inmate can hurt someone without being punished. I feel that I am "reducing the likelihood of future offenses" by going ahead within the legal system.

What about the man who hit me? I feel nothing but sadness when I think of him. I feel no anger, but I am concerned for him. The day following the attack, I talked to a lawyer and a paralegal to let them know I am still his chaplain and want to see him. I have been told that cannot happen because then

there is a conflict of interest. Given that reality, I've asked a social worker to let him know I am not angry at him and am concerned about him. I've also said that if he asks whether I am pressing charges to let him know I am, but to make sure he is locked in so he cannot hurt anyone.

The prophet Micah is one of my favorites. When he said that we are to "do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with our God," I find myself hoping that my decision follows that edict. I am humbled by the love that has come my way. I feel that justice will be served if the man receives ongoing physical and psychiatric care and is prevented from hurting others. I hope he is being treated mercifully. I believe it is also consistent with Restorative Justice as well.

When family, friends and coworkers ask how I am now, my response is, "Grateful beyond measure for all the love and care I have and continue to receive." May it be that way for all people who are victims of abuse, and may the abusers know that God is a God of justice and mercy. ☆



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Andrew J. Bacevich

## How America Screws Its Soldiers

**R**IDERS ON BOSTON SUBWAYS AND TROLLEYS are accustomed to seeing placards that advertise research being conducted at the city's many teaching hospitals. One that recently caught my eye, announcing an experimental "behavioral treatment," posed this question to potential subjects: "Are you in the U.S. military or a veteran disturbed by terrible things you have experienced?"

Just below the question, someone had scrawled this riposte in blue ink: "Thank God for these Men and Women. USA all the way."

Here on a thirty-by-thirty-six-inch piece of cardboard was the distilled essence of the present-day relationship between the American people and their military. In the eyes of citizens, the American soldier has a dual identity: as hero but also as victim. As victims — Wounded Warriors — soldiers deserve the best care money can buy; hence, the emphasis being paid to issues like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD.) As heroes, those who serve and sacrifice embody the virtues that underwrite American greatness. They therefore merit unstinting admiration.

Whatever practical meaning the slogan "support the troops" may possess, it lays here: in praise expressed for those choosing to wear the uniform, and in assistance made available to those who suffer as a consequence of that choice.

As the tenth anniversary of what we used to call the Global War on Terror approaches, a plausible, realistic blueprint for bringing that enterprise to a conclusion does not exist.

From the perspective of the American people, the principal attribute of this relationship is that it entails no real obligations or responsibilities. Face it: It costs us nothing yet enables us to feel good about ourselves. In an unmerited act of self-forgiveness, we thereby expunge the sin of the Vietnam



*Tacoma, Washington (March 8, 2003). Members of "Operation Support Our Troops" brave wet weather during a rally outside the main entrance to McChord Air Force Base. Local organizers gathered to show support for the President and the men and women of the U.S. military at home and abroad.*

era when opposition to an unpopular war found at least some Americans venting their unhappiness on the soldiers sent to fight it. The homeward-bound G.I. spat upon by spoiled and impudent student activists may be an urban legend, but the fiction persists and has long since trumped reality.

Today such egregious misbehavior has become unimaginable. Even if the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are not especially popular or successful, no one blames the troops. Instead we cheer them, pray for them, and let them go to the front of the line when passing through airport security. And we take considerable satisfaction in doing so.

From the perspective of those who engineer America's wars, the principal attribute of this relationship is that it obviates any need for accountability. For nearly a decade now, popular willingness to "support the troops" has provided unlimited drawing rights on the U.S. Treasury.

Since 9/11, in waging its various campaigns, overt and covert, the United States military has expended hundreds of billions of (mostly borrowed) dollars. By the time the last in-

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voice gets paid, the total will be in the trillions. Is the money being well spent? Are we getting good value? Is it possible that some of the largesse showered on U.S. forces trying to pacify Kandahar could be better put to use in helping to rebuild Cleveland? Given the existing terms of the civil-military relationship, even to pose such questions is unseemly. For politicians sending soldiers into battle, generals presiding over long, drawn-out, inconclusive campaigns, and contractors reaping large profits as a consequence, this war-comes-first mentality is exceedingly agreeable.

One wonders how many of those serving in the ranks are taken in by this fraud. The relationship between American people and their military — we love you; do whatever you want — seems to work for everyone. Everyone, that is, except soldiers themselves. They face the prospect of war without foreseeable end.

Americans once believed war to be a great evil. Whenever possible, war was to be avoided. When circumstances made war unavoidable, Americans wanted peace swiftly restored.

Present-day Americans, few of them directly affected by events in Iraq or Afghanistan, find war tolerable. They accept it. Since 9/11, war has become normalcy. Peace has become an entirely theoretical construct. A report of G.I.s getting shot at, maimed or killed is no longer something the average American gets exercised about. Rest assured that no such reports will interfere with plans for the long weekend that Memorial Day makes possible.

Members of the civil-military-corporate elite find war more than tolerable. Within its ranks, as Chris Hedges has noted, war imparts meaning and excitement to life. It serves as a medium through which ambitions are fulfilled and power is accrued and exercised. In Washington, the benefits offered by war's continuation easily outweigh any benefits to be gained by ending war. So why bother to try?

As the tenth anniversary of what Americans once called their Global War on Terror approaches, a plausible, realistic blueprint for bringing that enterprise to a conclusion does not exist. Those who might once have felt some responsibility for articulating such a plan — the president, his chief lieutenants, senior military leaders — no longer feel any obligation to do so. As a practical matter, they devote themselves to war's perpetuation, closing one front while opening another. More strikingly still, we the people allow our leaders to evade this basic responsibility to articulate a plan for peace. By implication, we endorse the unspoken assumption that peace has become implausible.

Here at last we come to the dirty little secret that underlines all the chatter about "supporting the troops": The people in charge don't really believe that the burdens borne by our soldiers will ever end and they are not really looking for ways to do so. As for the rest of us, well, we're OK with that. ☆

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E. James Lieberman, M.D.

## Casualties of War

**“T**HERE ARE NO ATHEISTS IN FOXHOLES,” THE saying goes; but according to Lieutenant Colonel (Ret.) Dave Grossman’s *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (Back Bay Books), there are many Conscientious Objectors. In World War II and before, only fifteen to twenty percent of soldiers fired their weapons at enemy soldiers in view, even if their own lives were endangered. Grossman, a military historian, psychologist and teacher at West Point, builds upon the find-

ings of General S. L. A. Marshall’s study *Men Against Fire* (1978), and confirmatory evidence from other conflicts, including the Napoleonic wars and the American Civil War. “Throughout history the majority of men on the battlefield would not attempt to kill the enemy, even to save their own lives.” This refusal is profound, surprising and well-hidden. To Grossman this is welcome proof of our humanity. Not a pacifist, he trains soldiers to kill, but wants them to regain the inhibitions needed to function peacefully in society.

The compunction against killing occurs in close combat situations, including aerial dogfights where pilots can see each other. It does not prevail with killing at a distance by artillery or bombings by airplanes. Machine gun teams

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also boost the firing rate because individuals cannot simply pretend to fire or intentionally mis-aim. In aerial combat one percent of pilots made over thirty percent of kills; the majority of fighter pilots never shot down a plane, perhaps never tried to.

Grossman spent years researching the innate resistance to killing and efforts to overcome it by armies throughout history — previously a taboo topic. He tells of desensitization, operant conditioning and psychotropic drugs that

raised to ninety percent the proportion of U.S. troops who shot to kill in Vietnam. The high incidence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among our three million Vietnam veterans was largely a product of disinhibition compounded by unprecedented unit instability and rapid return home from the front. He also points to loss of support at home for that war.

“In a way, the study of killing in combat is very much like the study of sex. Killing is a private, intimate occurrence of tremendous intensity, in which the destructive act becomes psychologically very much like the procreative act.” Hollywood battle scenes are to war what pornography is to sex: They provide spectacle and mechanics but no sense of intimacy. For centuries there were wars aplenty and lots of babies were born, so killing and sex were accepted while battlefield and bedroom behavior was a domain of ignorance and myth. Media today perpetuate the falsehood that killing, like sex, comes easily to normal men. Grossman takes heart for humanity from the normality of nonviolence.

In the American Civil War, well-trained soldiers fired over the enemy’s heads, or only pretended to fire. Of twenty-seven thousand muzzle-loading muskets recovered at Gettysburg, ninety percent were loaded, almost half with multiple loads. That could not be inadvertent. Further evidence was the low kill-rate in face-to-face battles. Citing similar phenomena during World War II, S. L. A. Marshall asserted: “Secretly, quietly... these soldiers found themselves to be conscientious objectors who were unable to kill their fellow man.” The secrets were well-kept, Grossman notes, in “a tangled web of individual and cultural forgetfulness, deception and lies tightly woven over thousands of years.... the male ego has always justified selective memory, self-deception, and lying [about] two institutions, sex and combat.”

Grossman devotes considerable attention to psychiatric casualties. Despite the exclusion of eight hundred thou-



*D. R. Howe (Glencoe, Minnesota) treats the wounds of Private First Class D. A. Crum (New Brighton, Pennsylvania), “H” Company, 2nd Battalion, Fifth Marine Regiment, during Operation Hue City, 1967.*

sand men on psychiatric grounds in World War II, over half a million U.S. fighters suffered mental collapse. After two months of continuous combat, ninety-eight percent of surviving troops suffered some psychopathology. The two percent who endured such combat with impunity appear to be “aggressive psychopaths.” Fear of injury and death, surprisingly, does not cause the mental stress that killing does: Sailors at great risk aboard ship did not crack,

because they were not involved in personal killing. Trying to intimidate civilians by bombing cities backfired in England and Germany: Survivors were enraged and hardened rather than demoralized. Psychiatric casualties come from exhaustion, hate and the burden of killing, not from fear.

Killing face-to-face is much harder than killing from behind: Fatalities are high among fleeing troops. Killing at close range (bayonet, knife, hand-to-hand) is harder than from long distance. Grossman’s chapters on atrocities analyze their causes and consequences in grisly detail. Here, Stanley Milgram’s experiments on submission to authority are relevant, as are principles of group solidarity, accountability and absolution. Antisocial actions need justification and support. PTSD reflects a failure to accept and rationalize acts of killing.

The high rate of firing in Vietnam followed training with desensitization and operant conditioning. Human silhouettes replaced bull’s-eye targets in shooting drills. A reflexive “quick shoot” response was cultivated. Regarding the enemy as less than human overcomes inhibition. Yet soldiers are responsible to military authority, which both enables shooting and restricts it. Unauthorized or errant shooting is severely punished. This control factor is missing in civilian society where, Grossman alleges, young people are pulled toward violence by media/video game conditioning and desensitization proven effective in boot camp.

Veterans of the Vietnam War have no higher rates of violent crimes than nonveterans, he notes, but they have very high rates of PTSD. Vietnam was the first time that soldiers joined and left units in the field as individuals; they had not trained and bonded together. Psychiatric casualties were low, in part due to use of psychotropic and other drugs, but unit cohesion was lost. The cooling-off period with group support, as on troop ships, disappeared with evacuation by plane. The war was unpopular, and soldiers got no heroes’ welcome at home.

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About two percent of soldiers lack the killing inhibition; they score high on measures of “aggressive psychopath.” Another one percent in this diagnostic category cannot endure military discipline. Grossman says the adaptable two percent serve well, return to civilian life and function as good citizens.

A dogged and effective voice of reform, Grossman is a loving critic of the military. His narrative is a mixture of inspiration and horror that brings to mind the saying, “Military intelligence is an oxymoron.” Soldiers live and work in an undemocratic organization: They don’t elect their leaders and they are not free to refuse orders. Most come to it young and inexperienced. This book might prove to be a touchstone document for informed consent for military service. When recruits sign up they should have the vivid understanding of benefits and risks presented here. Parents, teachers and politicians should know these things too.

There are studies galore connecting increased aggression with exposure to violent TV and videogames. Grossman doesn’t favor censorship; he believes that deglamorization and condemnation of violence will prevail. I am less optimistic. In two other areas he seems to exaggerate sources of harm. He cites high incarceration rates as correlates of increasing domestic violence, but the dramatic rise of our prison population is due largely to nonviolent drug offenders caught by discriminatory laws. And among factors contributing to PTSD after Vietnam, he rails against alleged — but unproven — hostile torrents against returning veterans by peace activists — spit-

ting, and epithets like “baby killer.” Missing from the discussion and bibliography are *No Victory Parades* (1971) by Murray Polner, and *The Spitting Image* (1998) by Jerry Lembcke. Reviews of the latter at Amazon.com are instructive. Loss of public support for the war was important, of course. For the perspective of a psychotherapist who worked with veterans extensively, see Edward Tick’s *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation’s Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (2005).

The National Academy of Sciences publication *Opportunities in Neuroscience for Future Army Applications* (2009; <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/12500.html>) seems to validate a chilling point made by Grossman: Armed forces here and abroad are looking for a chemical that would result in “armies of sociopaths.” Powerful forces in society strive to undermine the benign, nonviolent default position in intraspecies conflict. They have succeeded to a considerable degree in war, police work, news reports and entertainment that is pervasive and perverse. The richest and most powerful nation has become an anxious, muscle-bound warrior-state riddled with internal problems.

It is easier to kill millions at a distance than one person face-to-face. Dave Grossman confronts this conundrum with intelligence and passion. Other animals do not suffer intraspecies killing. We have engineered killing to a fare-thee-well and have to restore the dominion of good nature over homicidal ideology. Our fabulous habitat — that paradise between animals and angels — is not too big to fail. ☆

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## Murray Polner

# “What Harm Did He Do Thee, O Lord?”

**A**DAM HOCHSCHILD’S *TO END ALL WARS: A STORY of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), which mainly concentrates on Great Britain, is a haunting and illuminating assessment of World War I, and a welcome addition to the vast historical literature of that pointless war. And it is different. By no means a detailed and conventional history of battles, strategies and politicians, it is, firstly, a powerful condemnation of a war that should never have been fought. The battle at Passchendaele (officially, the Third Battle of Ypres) cost the lives of at

least three hundred thousand men. Hochschild rightly calls it “a blatant, needless massacre initiated by generals with a near-criminal disregard for the conditions men faced.” In northern Italy, German and Austrian armies at Caporetto caused more than five hundred thousand Italian casualties — dead, wounded or captured. On the eastern front the Russian armies, its generals and government, both corrupt and incompetent, were effectively defeated a year or so after the Romanovs entered the war.

What makes *To End All Wars* so original (mirroring to some extent Paul Fussell’s memorable 1975 book, *The Great War and Modern Memory*) is that Hochschild also eloquently tells the story of courageous and principled Britons and, to a lesser degree, the French Socialist antiwar leader Jean Jaurès, who op-

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posed the war and was then murdered by a right-wing assassin. Though Hochschild certainly praises the great antiwar soldier poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen (a combat lieutenant whose parents were told of his death in France the day the armistice was signed), he also looks sympathetically at those who chose to volunteer or accept conscription, men “for whom the magnetic attraction of combat, or at least the belief that it was patriotic and necessary, proved so much stronger than human revulsion at mass death or any perception that, win or lose, this was a war that would change the world for the worse.”

And indeed it did. The war was an abattoir, a charnel house consuming millions of soldiers, volunteers, reservists and draftees. (Britain, desperately needing ever more cannon fodder, instituted its draft in 1916.) Chlorine gas and mustard gas were used, as were tanks and aerial bombings. It was much like World War II and our own wars, large and small: laboratories for industrial warfare and the “prostitution of science for purposes of sheer destruction,” as the conservative Lord Lansdowne, former viceroy of India and secretary for war in the Lloyd-George cabinet, presciently put it in a letter to the prowar *Times* of London — which refused to publish it. The war, writes Hochschild, author of the brilliant *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, “forever shattered the self-assured sunlit Europe of hussars and dragoons in plumed helmets and emperors waving from open horse-drawn carriages.”

It was, too, a global war maintained by European empires — several of which would disintegrate; and its blood-spattered conclusion led to upheavals throughout Europe, led by many who had once cheered for the men sent to fight. Among the conscripts were my uncle and father, both drafted into the Russian army. My uncle was eventually taken prisoner by the Austro-Hungarians; my father deserted after the tsar’s abdication, was captured by a White army and pressed into service, after which he deserted once more.

Today, there are some two hundred British World War I cemeteries in Belgium and France alone. Separate graveyards contain the remains of Senegalese soldiers and Chinese laborers, “reminders,” notes Hochschild, “of how far men traveled to die.” Many of these cemeteries contain only pieces of bodies, and some remains have never been identified. The war touched all classes in Britain. Five grandsons of former Prime Minister Lord Salisbury were killed, as were the eldest son of Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and the two sons of the future PM, Bonar Law. In Germany, Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg lost his eldest son. Rudyard Kipling was a zealous supporter of the war (like John Buchan, John Galsworthy, Arthur Conan Doyle and, of course Winston Churchill) until his 18-year-old son John was killed in battle. It was then that the deeply aggrieved father, a perennial flag-waver who had never served in the military, composed an “enigmatic” (to Hochschild, but not to me) couplet in his “Epitaphs of the War”:

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

Georges Duhamel, a front-line doctor with the French army, reflected on what he, unlike Rudyard Kipling and other living room warriors, had lived through. In his memoir *The Life of Martyrs and Civilization, 1914-1917*, published in 1919, he wrote in anger about his experiences, declaring: “I hate the twentieth century as I hate rotten Europe and the whole world...”

Hochschild adds a long forgotten chapter of World War I by writing about the twenty thousand Britons who declared themselves to be Conscientious Objectors. Many chose alternative service, but six thousand British men were imprisoned rather than serve the war in any way. A few were sentenced to death but never executed. The pacifist Charlotte Despard (whose brother General Sir John French commanded British

forces in France until forced out by the equally incompetent and politically connected General Sir Douglas Haig) wrote and demonstrated against the war. Sylvia Pankhurst, an early suffragette, turned pacifist while her mother Emmaline and sister Christobel became fervent home-front warriors. Keir Hardie, labor leader and socialist, regularly and publicly opposed the war. Perhaps most prominently, because of his family heritage, Bertrand Russell, the mathematician and antiwar crusader, refused to believe the warmakers and their propagandists’ lies, for which he was briefly imprisoned. Indeed, the British government tried very hard to silence opponents of the war, using Scotland Yard and its director, Basil Thomson, to pursue antiwar people — much like the U.S. used the venal Edgar Hoover’s FBI during the Vietnam War, which Russell also publicly opposed. Not until

1919 were all British Conscientious Objectors released from prison. (In the U.S., Socialist leader Eugene V. Debs, imprisoned by the Wilson administration because he opposed conscription and the war, was not released until 1920, when the much-maligned Warren Harding became president.) And not until 2006, following a campaign organized by a citizen’s group called “Shot at Dawn,” did the British finally pardon more than three hundred soldiers executed during World War I.

The Allies were rescued by the arrival of fresh U.S. troops. Within a year or so it was all over. According to a conservative count by the U.S. War Department in 1924, over eight and a half million soldiers died in World War I and more than twenty-one million were wounded, including hundreds of thousands who lost their limbs, eyesight and hearing, while an astonishing number were badly shell-shocked. Hochschild movingly notes an epitaph placed by a mother and father on their son’s grave at Gallipoli: “What harm did he do Thee, O Lord?”

In 1919 the Allies, having won a Pyrrhic victory, forced Germany to sign a punitive treaty declaring itself solely to blame for the war, thus virtually assuring another war. For antiwar people, Hochschild concludes, their struggle against mass industrialized violence “remains to be fought again — and again.” ☆



**Georges Duhamel: “I hate the twentieth century as I hate rotten Europe and the whole world...”**