

SHALOM

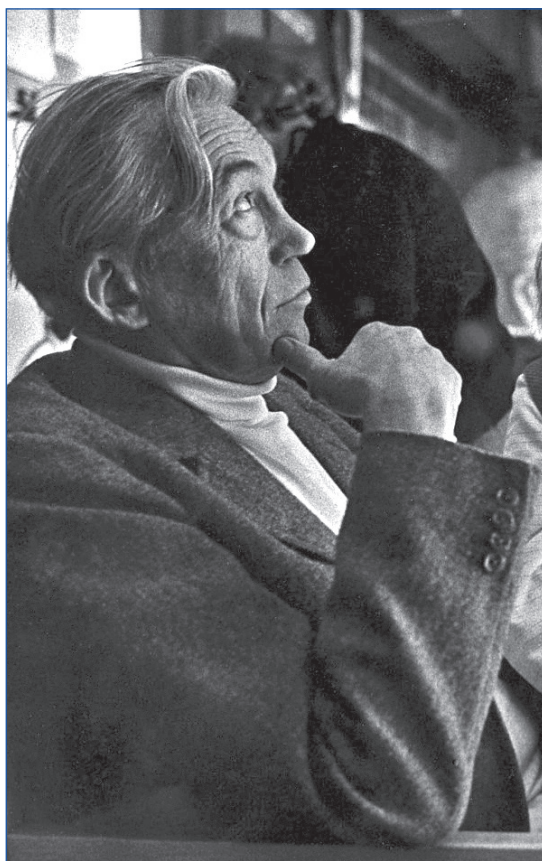
Jewish Peace Letter

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'Let There Be Light'



*Kelley Vlahos Hails John Huston's
Long-Censored Post-World War II Documentary
About Mentally Scarred Veterans*



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Stefan Merken

Enough!

WHILE PATIENTLY LISTENING TO THE POLITICAL barrage aimed at voters for the past several months, I have been struck by how casually political candidates mention our current American war. Afghanistan, or who knows where else in the coming months and years, is simply dismissed or even ignored. Instead, voters need to ask: What is actually behind the war? Any war?

Many of the young people we ask to fight have died (more than five thousand in Iraq and two thousand in Afghanistan) or become physically or mentally impaired. Many have killed themselves. Not to mention the many civilians who have suffered and will continue to suffer because of war. The reality is that there are American soldiers who have been fighting an enemy they will never know for a questionable cause and certainly one not worth dying for.

It always takes some refocusing to comprehend how politicians can accept the possibility of war (see today's easy acceptance for another by the powerful here, in Israel, and in Iran). In this country, where excessive nationalism too often trumps reality, virtually none of our Washington-based politicians and think-tankers have experienced actual combat, let alone served in the active military. Historically, we have relied on the gun rather than patient diplomacy.

What will it take for Americans to realize that we don't need to compel yet another generation to act as cannon fodder? What would it take for a major political party to say that

enough is enough? I recently read that today's Department of Defense budget is \$737 billion, which is more than the next ten largest military spenders combined.

Shall we demand no more money for the bloated military? No more dollars for tanks, missiles, drones, supersonic fighters and warships? Were that done, we might then have money to spend on social needs and education. We could even appoint a Secretary of Peace who would sit in the cabinet and advise those hungry for war and killing to find another way. What a revolutionary idea! ☆

IN MEMORIAM MAURICE S. FRIEDMAN

Maurice S. Friedman, a longtime JPF member, died on September 25, at the age of ninety. He is best known for his translation of the writings of Martin Buber (1878-1965) and a three-volume biography of the Austrian-born philosopher. Until the early 1950s Martin Buber's writings were pretty much unknown to Americans until Friedman translated them from the German. Buber's humanist and religious concepts were an important influence on such writers and thinkers as Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and many Jewish and non-Jewish civil rights and antiwar people. We in the JPF will certainly miss Maurice Friedman. ☆

STEFAN MERKEN is chair of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.

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Rabbi Philip Bentley

Tough Outside, Sweet Inside

SOME FRIENDS WHO ARE PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS activists support the BDS (Boycott, Disinvestment, Sanctions) campaign against Israel. I do not. Allow me to explain.

The problem is that many people who have never been to Israel and even many of those who have do not understand the country. I have met people who think all Israelis are religious when, in fact, most Israelis identify as secular Jews. Some think all Israelis revere the military and war. However, as important as the military is in the life of a typical Israeli, I have met very few who think of themselves as warriors.

Israel's founders envisioned a new kind of country which would seek to embody the highest human ideals. Israel's Declaration of Independence says:

THE STATE OF ISRAEL ... will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture....

I believe in the Zionism expressed in Israel's Declaration of Independence, and which the vast majority of Israelis see as the moral foundation of their country. Of course, the reality has never fully measured up to this lofty vision. Israel has crime, poverty, human rights problems, interference by fundamentalist religion in people's lives, and serious environmental challenges, not to mention political extremists and all the other troubles present elsewhere. When you add to this list thousands of years of persecution, a century of conflict, several wars, a great many terrorist attacks, diplomatic isolation and now the threat of international boycotts, it is surprising that Israel remains a democracy and open society.

What I also believe is that the occupation of Palestinian lands is the greatest threat to Israel's democratic future. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, said in 1967 that if Israel did not rid itself of the territories conquered in the Six-Day War, it would eventually poison Israel. He was right

Rabbi PHILIP BENTLEY is the JPF's Honorary President.



"What it means to be an Israeli is exemplified in the life of a famous Israeli who showed his Sabra toughness for a long time but in the end his sweeter side prevailed."

September 13, 1993: As President Bill Clinton looks on, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat shake hands to symbolize their support of an agreement to help establish Palestinian self-rule in lands claimed by both sides.

and this is increasingly evident now.

Too many of the arguments about the Israel-Palestine conflict stereotype Israelis and Palestinians alike. To decide that one of them is the innocent victim while the other is violent and cruel is shallow and honors neither no matter who is designated as the Good Guy. Both suffer from the effects of the conflict — the Occupation and fear of terrorism.

What it means to be an Israeli is exemplified in the life of a famous Israeli who showed his Sabra toughness for a long time but in the end his sweeter side prevailed. Yitzhak Rabin, born in Jerusalem in 1922, earned a degree at an agricultural college before beginning his military career. One of his most important assignments in 1948, a month after independence and during a war which few expected the new state to survive, was the scuttling of a ship filled with military supplies, the *Altalena*. The supplies were being brought to the Irgun, a violent and militant organization that had refused to become part of the newly formed Israel Defense Forces. The new government could not succeed with independent militias continuing their own campaigns. The idealism of Israel's

But Israelis who oppose the Occupation — and they are a significant portion of Israeli Jews — need all the support of the international community for their position. It is they who are harmed by the BDS movement, which fails to distinguish between those who prefer peace and those who do not.

founders was at stake, as was the political integrity of the new nation, even as some on the right still condemn the memory of Rabin for his role in sinking the *Altalena*.

Retiring from the military in 1968 he became Israel's ambassador to the United States and was very much an outspoken hawk. I was not an admirer. He returned to Israel in 1973 and began a political career with the Labor Party, which twice made him prime minister. He continued to be a hawk. His notorious orders to "break bones" of stone-throwers during the first intifada repulsed many Israelis and American Jews.

Then something truly amazing happened. He came to a realization that the violence would never end until Israel dealt directly with Palestinians and fashioned a peace accord. He took part in secret talks in Oslo with Yasir Arafat and the result was the famous handshake and peace treaty of 1993. That year Rabin, Arafat and Shimon Peres were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for this achievement. The following year Israel concluded a peace treaty with Jordan. Peace with the Palestinians, it was believed, would lead to the establishment of a Palestinian state and the end of the Occupation.

Most Israelis responded with great rejoicing, but the political right was bitterly opposed and demonized Rabin, some of whom excoriated him as just another Hitler. The settlers and their followers considered Oslo to be a catastrophe. In November 1995 Yitzhak Rabin spoke at a mass peace rally in The Kings of Israel Square in Tel Aviv, the site of many huge demonstrations. At the end of the rally he joined in singing *Shir La-Shalom* (Song for Peace), the anthem of Israel's peace movement:

*So, sing only a song for peace, do not whisper a prayer
Better to sing a song for peace with a great shout.*

The American equivalent would be General David Petraeus joining Bruce Springsteen to sing *Kumbaya* before half a million war protesters on the National Mall. A few minutes later an Orthodox yeshiva student shot Rabin to death. The peace process and the peace movement have never fully recovered.

About a year ago I attended the biennial conference of Rabbis for Human Rights–North America. It was a gathering of exactly the right people at which to discuss BDS with both Israelis and Americans present. The rights of Palestinians are a major part of RHR's agenda in Israel. They work with other Israeli and Palestinian NGOs on a broad spectrum of human rights issues despite being regarded with suspicion and hostility by many Israelis. At the conference I raised questions and discussed the BDS movement with people on both sides of the issue, all of whom, I know, are committed to human

rights and all of whom are working to protect Palestinians from abuses and hope to end the Occupation. People I respect stood firmly on both sides of the question.

So why am I uncomfortable with the BDS campaign when I recognize that it is a nonviolent action in support of an oppressed and persecuted people? Because I think attacking Israel as a whole only adds to the conflict, stimulates Israeli defensiveness, and is thus likely to make Israel less likely to ever take steps to end the Occupation.

Yes, Israelis who defend the Occupation need to know that people around the world condemn the outrages suffered by Palestinians. But Israelis who oppose the Occupation — and they are a significant portion of Israeli Jews — need all the support of the international community for their position. It is they who are harmed by the BDS movement, which fails to distinguish between those who prefer peace and those who do not.

I am troubled as well by the rhetoric of some BDS supporters who clearly have no sympathy for Israel and who may be motivated by hatred of Israel or even of Jews in general. I have seen explicit expressions of anti-Semitism by activists in antiwar marches, at UN meetings, and online. I cannot join hands with such people even when we share a just cause. Moreover, the call by some outside Israel to silence visiting Israeli intellectuals and artists by refusing to allow them to speak, teach or perform is repulsive. I may protest what is written, said or expressed, but freedom of speech is basic to a free society and must protect even the ideas I hate. And to those intellectuals and writers who have boycotted or cancelled performances in Israel, I say you are denying sympathetic audiences the opportunity to hear ideas that might strengthen Israelis who prefer peace rather than more military adventures.

A blanket BDS campaign against Israel, especially one that includes a secondary boycott of companies that do business with Israel is too reminiscent of the Arab boycott that began even before Israel came into being and lasted until the mid-1990s. The purpose of that campaign was to destroy Israel. Israelis, I am afraid, will rightly view the BDS campaign as yet another attempt to destroy Israel and will make them less likely to respond in any positive way. Instead, I support investment and companies doing business with Palestinian entrepreneurs, including those working in partnership with Israelis. Palestinians in the Occupied Territories need to decide for themselves which companies doing business in their region to boycott and sanction and which to encourage.

In the end, I believe and have always believed Israel and the Palestinians have to resolve the conflict themselves. I do

not know what form such a peace will take. I do know that it must leave everyone feeling safe and secure. I know that it will require Israelis and Palestinians to see each other as human and, better yet, as members of the same family.

Gazan psychiatrist Iyyad Seraj says that Israelis and Palestinians are both traumatized people and need each other to heal. I hope there will be truth and reconciliation hearings

like those in South Africa and Rwanda. Rabbi Menachem Froman, a founder of the settlement movement, envisions Jewish and Palestinian states in the Land of Israel/Palestine. Certainly, neither people will give in under pressure, nor will either know peace without the other knowing peace.

I do not see the BDS campaign as being able to achieve any of that. ☆

Israel's Disarmament Movement

Nadav Sha'altiel

Bombs Away

THE ISRAELI DISARMAMENT MOVEMENT (IDM), A grassroots organization, was established in 2007 as a Greenpeace initiative, and in 2011 became the first nuclear disarmament NGO in Israel. The original Greenpeace Disarmament Campaign in Israel was led by Sharon Dolev, a human rights activist in Israeli civil society. Upon leaving Greenpeace in 2011 she founded the IDM, and today serves as its director.

Until recently Israelis paid little or no attention to the threat that nuclear power and nuclear weapons pose. Indeed, these issues were taboo and never publicly discussed. It was only recently, with all the talk about Iran attacking Israel, that the matter was opened for discussion. But then the public conversation focused on the Iranian nuclear threat, without taking into consideration Israel's large nuclear arsenal. Faced with this challenge IDM members have taken it upon themselves to try to change attitudes within Israel and promote the idea of a nuclear-free world.

Although only recently established, the IDM has already had some successes. It has managed to conduct side events at every Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) convention since 2008 (first with Greenpeace, and then independently). It has promoted its policies inside the corridors of the UN during the Non-Proliferation Treaty meetings, the First Committee of the General Assembly meetings, and the Conference on Disarmament. In yet another project,

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NADAV SHA'ALTIEL is a member of the Israeli Disarmament Movement's core team and coordinates the organization's research and educational programs.



Sharon Dolev, founder of the Israeli Disarmament Movement.

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The ALL FOR PEACE RADIO program is conducted mainly in Hebrew, but during the last ten minutes of the weekly program the conversation is in English. <http://allforpeace.org/heb/sharon3072012/>.

the IDM represented Israel's Mayors for Peace, obtaining fifty-five signatures from mayors of Israeli cities calling for a nuclear weapons-free world.

The IDM is part of the larger International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which aims for a nuclear-free world on a global level. At the same time it is realistic about its short-term goals in Israel, preferring a pragmatic approach for reaching people by focusing on the Israel/Iran nuclear standoff while actively opposing any attack on Iran.

The IDM also draws attention to the Helsinki regional WMD (weapons of mass destruction) disarmament talks, again stressing the importance of finding a compromise with Iran and proposing confidence measures between all sides. Still, as any public dialogue about these subjects in Israel is usually polarized, either by promoting a war with Iran or simply by avoiding the nuclear issue completely, there is a dire need to open up the issue for debate and discussion.

Our position on promoting the Helsinki initiative, as part of a solution to avoid war and achieve greater security for all who live in the Middle East, has of late generated some interest among the media and ordinary Israelis. The media has started to take a greater interest, and hopefully this in turn will help to create the desired public opinion that will force the current administration to better inform the public on the matter.

The threat of war has given the IDM a great opportunity to promote more public participation through different actions, such as recruiting new members and expanding its outreach. Today the IDM has a Facebook page and leads pro-



September 2012: Atomic bomb survivors Miyake Nobuo (right) and Nagayama Iwao, delegates with Japan's Peace Boat NGO, place their wishes for nuclear abolition in the Western Wall during the disarmament organization's visit to Israel.

test actions against war with Iran. Additionally, the IDM has a weekly radio program, holds lectures in different forums, and continues to take part in different UN conventions.

The highlight of this year's activities was a visit in September by a delegation of Hiroshima survivors. They met with the public in several venues, including Holocaust survivors at Yad V'Shem Holocaust Memorial. These meetings will, with hope, raise public awareness of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons, and break the cycle of silence which is encouraged by the state. ☆

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Murray Polner

Shanghai'd

DEFTLY WEAVING THE PERSONAL AND POLITICAL, Steve Hochstadt, who teaches history at Illinois College, tells an absorbing story of some sixteen thousand Central European Jewish refugees who fled the Nazis with heroic help from Feng Shan Ho, the Chinese consul-general in Vienna, who handed out Chinese visas to Jews desperately trying to escape. (Yad Vashem, the Jewish memorial to Jewish victims and non-Jewish rescuers, has honored Feng Shan Ho).

Exodus to Shanghai: Stories of Escape From The Third Reich (Palgrave Macmillan) is a story that has been told before, most notably by David Kranzler in his original *Japanese, Nazis and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community in Shanghai, 1938-45*, but which has been forgotten largely because of the understandable attention given the European Holocaust. The singular value of *Exodus to Shanghai* is its reliance on personal testimonies of one hundred refugees Hochstadt managed to locate. What he does best is set the stage, following the frightened and panicky departure of men, women and children from Nazi Europe on their way to life in Shanghai and eventual dispersion to the few countries that would have them.

The refugees encountered a Shanghai that was a cosmopolitan city divided since the Opium War of 1842, when the British took control of the opium trade in China and thereafter controlled the International Settlement where their and French, Russian and American commercial and imperial interests were headquartered. Its western subjects were governed by the law of extraterritoriality, and the Chinese had little authority there until Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalists arrived in 1927. Russian Jews escaping Tsarist and Communist rule, and about a thousand Baghda-

di Jews, many of whom had come at the turn of the century to avoid being drafted into the Ottoman army, were already settled in Shanghai when the new refugees arrived.

Hochstadt's connection to those years is personal. "I grew up with the exodus to Shanghai on my mind. My father and his family were hounded out of Vienna by the Nazis; my father came to the United States, but his parents fled to Shanghai."

He memorably describes the immigration as "an exile of little people." "We basically came penniless," one woman told him. "There were very many people, very poor people here," said another. Many newcomers witnessed scenes they had

never before seen, particularly people lying dead in the streets. Shocked at the sight, one woman told Hochstadt, "Nobody picked them up. It was a very bad time in Shanghai for the Chinese people, too. More than for us, I say."

Still the newcomers did their best to recreate their past lives. They opened a school for youngsters, and published the *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle*. They were doctors and nurses, business people, tailors, actors, a boxer and a magician, whose Russian Jewish friend set up a tour to Japanese-occupied territories, including Peking, Tsientsin and Tsingtao, where he performed before factory workers and rickshaw coolies. One student attended St. John's University, where English was the primary language of instruction.

Several thousand refugees followed them. The entire ultra-Orthodox Mirrer Yeshiva crossed the Soviet Union via the Trans-Siberian Railway and received Japanese approval to enter Shanghai. They would later move to

Japan and eventually to the U.S. Speaking Yiddish, uniquely garbed, they had little or no contact with the Central Europeans living near them. They even published a Yiddish language newspaper. "As far as they were concerned," complained a non-Orthodox woman, "we weren't even Jewish."

Night life flourished for anyone who had the desire or



Passport to Life: A visa to Shanghai issued to Viennese Jews during World War II.

MURRAY POLNER is co-editor of SHALOM.

money. One person recalled seeing “a prominent Nazi sitting with a Jewish bar girl and buying drinks” in a club. A Jewish dressmaker spoke of a Nazi official’s wife befriending her. It was as if the world were upside down. Bands played swing and jazz, and sometimes it seemed to resemble an old Hollywood film. Theater groups sprang up. In neighboring Hangkou, night clubs, often owned by Jews, seemed to be everywhere. Those with money made out and the many who didn’t struggled.

Remarkably, Jews were treated relatively well compared with how brutally the Japanese treated Chinese in Shanghai and throughout the country. Despite restrictions and occasional acts of cruelty, the Japanese, with no tradition of anti-Semitism, resisted German urgings to round up the refugees.

Hochstadt puts it in perspective: “While French police rounded up Jews and delivered them to trains heading toward Auschwitz, and Lithuanian mobs publicly beat Jews to death, by resisting German pressure to murder Jews and providing a refuge where thousands could survive, the Japanese most clearly resemble the Italians, the Danes and the Bulgarians.”

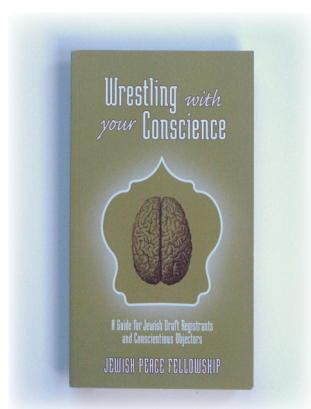
After the Japanese surrendered in 1945 a few refugees remained but others scattered throughout the world. For many, the experience was hard to forget. After the war, one couple wandered between Berlin, New York, and then back



Religious school for Jewish refugee children. Shanghai ghetto, China, September 8, 1944.

to Germany. “Then we got this house in Portugal, because I wanted someplace I can go in a hurry in case the shit hits the fan. And it looked a few times like it would. During the Cold War there were many hairy situations.”

If there is any lesson to be learned it is that wars, oppressive governments, ethnic and religious conflicts, and economic deprivation always lead to “exiles of little people” and far too many nations and people unwilling to rescue them. ☆



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Kelley Vlahos

‘Let There Be Light’

John Huston’s WWII Documentary Shatters Clichés

MY FATHER LIKES TO TELL A STORY ABOUT THE men living on the railroad tracks where he grew up in central Connecticut. When he was boy he often rode the tracks on his bike and came across what he thought were “hobos” along the way.

He was surprised when my grandfather, a World War II Army veteran of the Battle of the Bulge, ruefully told him they were veterans. In essence, *they never came home from the war*, he told his son, a child of the New Frontier who had grown up on John Wayne celluloid depictions of the war, snug in the can-do image of boom and fortitude reflected in the monochromatic images provided by Hollywood and Madison Avenue. There was no room for misfits or traumatized veterans in this American Dream. So they were easily marginalized and forgotten by society, at least in our town, there on the tracks.

As it turns out, not only were they not alone, but there were big hospitals (or in old-fashioned speak, sanitariums) for the thousands of men who returned from World War II with what the old timers called “shell shock” and we know now as post-traumatic stress disorder. That there was a high rate of “psychotic neurosis” among those vets is no surprise considering the scope and violence of the war, which claimed some half a million American lives. That society had nearly airbrushed them out of our contemporary understanding of post-World War II American life is extraordinary.

There are numerous reasons why these hospitals and their patients may not be widely known today. One is plain censorship, as in the case of the 1946 documentary *Let There Be Light*, commissioned by the US Army Signal Corps in 1946. The film, directed by powerhouse director John Huston (who was then a major in the corps) and beautifully photographed by a team led by Stanley Cortez, followed seventy-five returning World War II vets suffering “psychotic neurosis” from the war.

Their conditions manifested in such maladies as stuttering, nervous tics, paralysis, amnesia and social phobias, leading them to an eight-week stint in one of these huge Army hospitals. Huston and his crew had done such a wonderful job of drilling

down seventy-five hours of interviews between the Army psychiatrists and their patients — exposing at a rare level (at least at that time) the pain, the sense of isolation, guilt, and melancholy these men brought home from them the war — that the Army simply banned *Let There Be Light* and kept it from public view for the next thirty years.

The Army was so frightened that the film would hurt recruitment that when Huston tried to screen it for his friends at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City, a couple of military police came and seized it, supposedly on the pretense that the film would violate the privacy of the vets involved. The War Department claimed the releases signed by the men had been lost, but the Army never attempted to get new ones. In Huston’s words:

We then pointed out that, though the film indeed represented a deeply personal investigation into the innermost lives of these men, nothing was disclosed which might cause them to be ashamed. We proposed asking them individually to write letters of clearance, but the War Department said no. The authorities had made up their minds.

So the documentary was locked up in a vault, along with some of the most truthful reflections of the war and the human psyche captured on film up to that time.

Let There Be Light was at last released in 1980, but it was in such poor shape that many reviewers scoffed. Plus, they had *The Deer Hunter* and *Coming Home*, and PTSD just was just getting its official due, so everyone knew about head trips and neuroses. What did they care about some grainy 35-mm film whose dialogue you could barely hear over the crackles and pops of the bad audio?

That all recently changed, thanks to the National Film Preservation Foundation, which lovingly restored both the picture and the audio of Huston’s poignant documentary — narrated by his father, actor Walter Huston — and is streaming it now for free on its Web site, www.filmpreservation.org.

In the film notes, Huston, who went on later to direct such classics as *The Red Badge of Courage* and *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, described his work:

KELLY VLAHOS is a Washington-based writer specializing in war policy, veterans, civil liberties and national politics. This originally appeared in *The American Conservative*.



Film frames from John Huston's 1946 PTSD documentary, *Let There Be Light*.

I visited a number of Army hospitals during the research phase, and finally settled on Mason General Hospital on Long Island as the best place to make the picture. It was the biggest in the East, and the officers and doctors there were the most sympathetic and willing.... The hospital admitted two groups of seventy-five patients each week, and the goal was to restore these men physically, mentally and emotionally within six to eight weeks, to the point where they could be returned to civilian life in as good condition — or almost as good—as when they came into the Army.... I decided that the best way to make the film was to follow one group through from the day of their arrival until their discharge.... When the patients arrived, they were in various conditions of emotional distress. Some had tics; some were paralyzed; one in ten was psychotic. Most of them fell into the general designation of 'anxiety neurosis.'.... [Charles] Kaufman and I wrote the script as the picture was shot, which, I think, is the ideal way to make a documentary.... [The purpose] was to show how men who suffered mental damage in the service should not be written off but could be helped by psychiatric treatment.... The original idea was that the film be shown to those who would be able to give employment in industry, to reassure them that the men discharged under this section were not insane, but were employable, as trustworthy as anyone.

Reviewers have called it noir, but that doesn't necessarily

mean this is classic noir in the gritty literary sense, and if you are looking for some John Cassavetes-style cinema verité circa 1966 then this is not the place. Remember, this was commissioned by the Army in 1946. Aside from the first-time use of unscripted interviews and exchanges among the vets and their psychiatrists (a technique that was indeed adopted and broadened by Cassavetes and others years later), the documentary tracks with the postwar ethos, in the sense that the highlighted veterans are eventually cured of their ills and readied to reintegrate back into the hopeful conventionality of American society. The film is accompanied by that breezy 1940s music we associate with screwball comedies of the time, nothing ominous or foreboding as we might expect today.

But it is nearly staggering because the fears and angst of these men are no different from those of

the hundreds of thousands who are suffering from the same problems today, from our current wars. If the snooty reviewers from 1980 were able to get past the poor quality of the film, they might have recognized that if trauma had been dealt with more openly and honestly after World War II — no censorship, no spin — the country might have been better prepared to deal with the problem when our Vietnam veterans returned the way they did in the 1970s.

Apparently, according to film notes, the Army was so upset by Huston's film that they commissioned another one, but this time with actors reading a script, which hewed closely to the vignettes in the original but sanitized them along the way. It was laughable and seemed to be less a remake of *Let There Be Light* than an argument against it.

Many of us spend Memorial Day and Veterans Day and even the Fourth of July watching war movies. These movies are generally prescribed from a modern canon of approved films, and are repeated often. You know what they are. A recent weekend's schedule of movies listed on American Movie Classics' cable channel offers the best example: *A Bridge Too Far*, *Patton*, *Flags of Our Fathers*, *To Hell and Back*, *The Dirty Dozen*, *The Green Berets*. Classics.

The media and the government have done their best to shape the lens through which we see war and its effects on the men and women who fight it. Huston's film bucked that, and for doing so was banned. Now we have a chance to see it, and maybe in a little way *Let There Be Light* will serve as an opportunity to start questioning the clichés, if not our collective understanding, of post-World War II America. ☆