

# SHALOM

*Jewish Peace Letter*

Vol. 42 No. 9

Published by the Jewish Peace Fellowship

DECEMBER 2013



## **William Astore** **Wars Я US**

*Disaster  
capitalism  
on the battlefield  
&  
in the boardroom*

**Stefan Merken • *A Letter from Rome***

### **Israel**

**Yossi Gurvitz • *Stealing Palestinian Land***

**Kayla Zecher • *Refugee Policies Compared***

**Scott D. Sagan • *Stuff Happens to Nukes***

**Murray Polner • *On the Couch at Nuremberg***

Stefan Merken

## Letter from Rome

**I** AM WRITING THIS WHILE SITTING IN A SMALL café in Rome's old Jewish Ghetto. My wife Betty and I have been in Rome for a few days, staying in a small apartment a few blocks from the Campo di Fiori. It's an excellent location for walking to many of the sites and sights we have on our "to see" list and a good place to catch a bus to almost anywhere else in the city.

Our first stop was the Grand Synagogue of Rome (Temple Maggiore) and the Jewish Museum. There are actually twelve synagogues in Rome, but there is only one in what is called "the Jewish Ghetto." An interesting footnote about the Jewish community in Rome: You don't join a particular synagogue; rather, all Jews in Rome donate money to a community fund that supports community institutions. This fund in turn contributes money to each synagogue. Another footnote: Temple Maggiore's basement also houses The Jewish Museum of Rome, which holds a vast collection of extraordinary artifacts from the long rich tradition of Roman Jewish life.

In the second century BCE, Jews came as traders from the Middle East. After the Roman Empire's conquest of Jerusalem in 70 CE, they arrived as slaves. Post-1492, they fled Spain and Sicily to escape the Inquisition. This immigration was later augmented by Jews from central and eastern Europe, and even from north Africa. They gathered in what is now called the Jewish Ghetto, a small four- or five-square-block area along the Tiber River. No buildings of the original ghetto survive, but the geographical boundary remains the same. As I glance out the café window, I can see a thriving community of restaurants, many serving Israeli dishes and traditional Roman Jewish food. My wife and I were anxious to taste the *carciofi alla Romana*, a small fried artichoke. (Delicious!) Nearby are cafés and lots of shops that sell all types of Jewish memorabilia, and a busy Jewish day school.

Walking back towards our apartment, we once again



*The Temple Maggiore (Grand Synagogue) in Rome's Jewish Ghetto, seen from the Tiber River.*

entered the Campo di Fiori and found a brass plaque in the middle of the piazza that commemorates the Inquisition's confiscation of every copy of the Talmud in Italy. The search took about nine days. On Rosh Hashanah, in 1553, these and many other Jewish books were burned in the Campo di Fiori.

We will be in Rome for more than three weeks. We have a long list of places we've wanted to see for years and have never had the time to investigate. Our apartment has Wi-Fi, a roomy kitchen, and a small balcony. In September and October the weather is not as hot as in the summer months. This is a great way to spend a vacation if you are willing to walk a bit and perhaps get on the wrong bus from time to time. For us, spending time in the Jewish Ghetto, attending Friday and Saturday services in the Grand Synagogue of Rome, getting to experience some of the rich history of Jews of Rome, is only part of the joy. ✧

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

### A NOTICE TO OUR READERS

The next issue of *SHALOM* will appear in February 2014.  
With our wishes for a Happy, Safe and Peaceful New Year,  
*The Editors*

Yossi Gurvitz

## Like Thieves in the Night

### *Stealing Palestinian land for Beit El*

**U**P UNTIL A FEW MONTHS ago, I lived in a Jaffan cubicle, for which I shelled out a large sum to a blackguard who shall remain unnamed. One day, I heard a ring at the door. I opened it with some trepidation, only to be informed by a municipal inspector that my neighbors next door were asking permission to do some remodeling. Wondering what this had to do with me, as I was only a lowly renter, the inspector made it clear to me that I had the right to oppose the construction, and that it was his job to inform me of this right.

This is how things are carried out in a law-abiding region. The West Bank is famously not such a region. If any more proof is necessary, please look at the pictures on the next page.

The first is a seizure order signed by Brigadier General Binyamin Eliezer, July 18, 1979; the second is a map of the seized land, taken from the lands of the village Dura Al Qara; the third is a document issued by Major Amnon Shasha a day later. Paragraph 6a in Shasha's document stipulates that the "seizure order is not to be published to the locals"; paragraph 8 stipulates that "no publicity is to be given to the order."

Why am I boring you with paperwork from 1979, a time so unenlightened that its favorite music was disco? Because it shows how the system of theft works in the West Bank.

Shasha was basically ordering confiscation of private, registered land, ostensibly for security reasons. In fact this land was confiscated for the purpose of building a settle-



*Construction at the settlement of Beit El, February 5, 2013.*

ment, and that fact was hidden from the village's Palestinian residents. By doing so, Shasha deprived them of their right to protect themselves from the order by appealing to the High Court of Justice.

Such an act, the High Court ruled in 2005, is reserved for totalitarian states: "Secret legislation, kept in hidden archives, is one of the signs of a totalitarian regime and contradicts the rule of law." Now we expect the

court to follow its own ruling.

Attorneys Michael Sfar, Muhammad Shaqir, Shlomy Zachary and Anu Lusky recently petitioned the High Court on behalf of Yesh Din, in the name of Abd-Al-Rahman Ahmed Abd-Al-Rahman Qassem, a resident of Dura Al Qara whose land was confiscated under Shasha's order. It is important to note that since the land was confiscated—thirty-four years ago—no military use has been made of Qassem's land.

Seizure orders, according to international law and the judgments of the High Court, allow the seizure of lands only for pressing military needs. For instance, land may be seized to build fortifications on it to block an advancing enemy force, or to erect an observation post. Military necessity, by its very nature, expires after time has passed or, as our petition states, "the military order that is the subject of this petition is essentially intended to answer an immediate and pressing military necessity, therefore it is temporary in nature, as the presence of the IDF forces in the West Bank is temporary." If the army has not used the land all this time, the reasonable conclusion is that it has no such need.

Shasha's document also hints at the real goal of seizing the land: the expansion of the settlement of Beit El. While the army made no use of the land, settlers invaded it in 2010,

---

**YOSSI GURVITZ** is a blogger for *Yesh Din/Volunteers for Human Rights*, an organization in Israel working to defend the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation.



**Seizure and silence (rom left to right): Seizure order signed by Brigadier Geneneral Binyamin Eliezer, July 18, 1979; a map of the seized land, taken from the lands of the village Dura Al Qara; a document issued on July 19, 1979, by Major Amnon Shasha. Paragraph 6a stipulates that the “seizure order is not to be published to the locals”; paragraph 8 stipulates that “no publicity is to be given to the order.”**

and began illegal construction. It was illegal enough to cause the Civil Administration to issue demolition orders for those structures that same year — orders which were never enforced since the rule of law is important, but the settlers’ political lobby is more important.

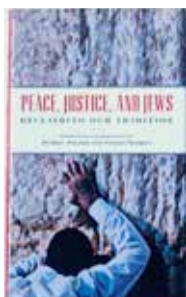
Our petition demands that, since the army has made no use of Qassem’s land for the past thirty-four years, it is time to return it to its owners — before the government pulls a fast one and “retroactively validates” the illegal construction on the site, which is part of the slippery deal Prime Minister Netanyahu offered after the evacuation of the Ulpana Hill. The land must be returned to its owners both because no legal use was made of it and so much time has passed since it was confiscated for alleged military use, and because the procedure used to seize it — Shasha’s order — was completely invalid.

And a final, critical point. Shasha, you’ll recall, was a major. The man who issued the original land seizure order, which said that “an announcement of the content of this or-

der is to be given to the owners or holders of land in the area” was a brigadier general. And not just any brigadier general: Binyamin “Fuad” Ben Eliezer — although his political career obscured it — was an outstanding and famous officer.

How did a major allow himself to openly, in writing, defy an order signed by a general, and a prominent one, at that? Perhaps because, even then, IDF officers knew which way “the Commander’s Spirit” points: actions promoting effective annexation. And they knew that even if Ben Eliezer himself wouldn’t like what was done to his order, his seniors in the army or government would. And that’s another way the occupation corrupts the army. ☆

*A version of this article was first published on Yesh Din’s blog ([www.yesh-din.org](http://www.yesh-din.org)). For additional original analysis and breaking news, visit +972 Magazine’s Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/972magazine](http://www.facebook.com/972magazine)), or follow on Twitter (<http://twitter.com/972mag>).*



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

Edited by Murray Polner and Stefan Merken.

A landmark collection of contemporary progressive Jewish thought written by activists from Israel, the U.S. and the U.K.

\$25.00 per copy, plus \$5.00 for shipping

Kayla Zecher

## Immigrants: U.S. and Israeli Styles

**A**S I FINISHED UP MY FINAL WEEK AT THE HARVARD Immigration and Refugee Clinic, a few things came to mind. And more things come to mind as I anticipate my return home to Israel, where I will continue to study law and work with the refugee community.

It has been wonderful reacquainting myself with US asylum law — a system which those of us working on these issues in Israel strive to emulate. I mean, not the enormous backlog for family reunification applicants or, for that matter, the ardent xenophobia that is so prevalent in certain American states. But for the most part, it is encouraging to get acquainted with a system in which asylum seekers are given more than two options: getting deported and facing death or life imprisonment in their country of origin, or remaining in the host country with absolutely no basic rights. This is the situation in Israel.

I have been working for the past four years with the refugee community in Israel. I have seen South Sudanese refugees deported, even those successfully enrolled in an Israeli university, despite confirmation that earlier deportees have already disappeared and were rumored to have been killed upon return. I have witnessed racist riots in the neighborhoods of South Tel

Aviv where the migrant community is the largest, and heard the community of asylum seekers referred to as “black infiltrators” and the “cancer which ails Israel.” I have met Eritrean women

who were kidnapped on their way to find work in Sudan, trafficked through the torture camps in the Sinai, then dropped off in Israel where, with no basic rights, attention or work available to them they have been coerced into the sex industry.

Against this backdrop, I have also seen countless volunteers and NGO staffers work tirelessly alongside the refugee community to improve the situation. I have seen members of the refugee community rise up and begin empowering and standing up for other members of their community — helping to protect refugee women from domestic violence, providing shelters for homeless women and children, and developing numerous education opportunities.

This summer has provided me with perspective, one that is very easy to lose in tiny Israel while working in immigration issues. The US only adopted international refugee law into its domestic law in the 1980s, and only began implementing it in

the 1990s. And American human rights advocates are still working tirelessly to put gender-based persecution and domestic violence cases on every US asylum officer’s map as legitimate bases for asylum.

This perspective was one I gained from conversations with the experienced, brilliant and dedicated staff at the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic, and it was sharpened during an impromptu meeting with a Guatemalan activist



*Outside of the Eritrean embassy in Tel Aviv, hundreds of Eritreans hold weekly demonstrations protesting the dictatorship in their homeland.*

**KAYLA ZECHER lives in Tel Aviv. She studies human rights law with a focus on immigration and asylum law. She also works for an NGO, concentrating on human trafficking efforts. This article is adapted from a posting that first appeared on the Harvard Immigration and Refugee blog.**

who relayed, in a small conference room, his heart-wrenching experience. In very fast Spanish (which I don't speak), he related details of the trial of Efrain Rios Montt last year, accused of conducting a campaign of genocide. Next to the activist sat a refugee from Guatemala who had survived the genocide and had received asylum in the US with help from Greater Boston Legal Services and the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic.

As he spoke, it became clear to me that the US was not accepting desperate Guatemalan and El Salvadorian refugees between the years 1981 through 1983 because the US essentially supported these regimes as part of its anticommunist policies during the Cold War. The US was then accepting a pitiful three percent of asylum requests, while other countries were accepting close to eighty percent. The parallel to Israel today and the US thirty years ago was very stark. In Israel, we accept around seventeen hundredths of one percent of Eritrean refugees, while in the UK, for example, they accept about eighty-six. Israel has diplomatic relations with Eritrea. Outside of the Eritrean embassy in Tel Aviv, hundreds of Eritreans hold weekly demonstrations protesting the dictatorship. America's policy was eventually changed by the small groups of people who did right. Churches and synagogues harbored refugees, because it was the right thing to do, despite their government's position.

I believe we in Israel today face a situation similar to the one in the US during the early 1980s. And, although I do not have hope that soon we will be having conversations about how many noncitizen college students may receive citizenship upon completing their studies, as with the DREAM Act in the US, I will continue to fight for basic medical care for asylum seekers and I will continue to believe that one day this will be our conversation in Israel. American churches and synagogues that lent a hand to Guatemalan refugees in the 1980s were doing what was right, and they could not have known for certain that what they were doing would help lay the foundation for a more just US refugee policy.

The large family that is the Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic was inspiring and it was an honor to work with them this summer. The image that will stay with me when I return to Israel will be from the Asylum Acceptance annual office party: the happiness of numerous families chatting with the attorneys who argued their successful asylum requests. I will take this picture back with me to Israel, hoping that one day I will meet *someone* who fled terrible conditions in their home country and was welcomed in Israel with permanent residence status, and I hope that what we are doing today in Israel will have contributed to that process. ☆

# SHALOM *Jewish Peace Letter*

Published by the Jewish Peace Fellowship • Box 271 • Nyack, N.Y. 10960 • (845) 358-4601  
**HONORARY PRESIDENT** Rabbi Philip J. Bentley • **CHAIR** Stefan Merken • **VICE PRESIDENT** Rabbi Leonard Beerman  
**EDITORS** Murray Polner & Adam Simms • **CONTRIBUTING EDITORS** Lawrence S. Wittner, Patrick Henry, E. James Lieberman

*Established in 1941*

E-mail: [jpf@forusa.org](mailto:jpf@forusa.org) • World Wide Web: <http://www.jewishpeacefellowship.org>  
*Signed articles are the opinions of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the JPF.*

## Yes! Here is my tax-deductible contribution to the Jewish Peace Fellowship!



\$25 /  \$36 /  \$50 /  \$100 /  \$250 /  \$500 /  \$1000 /  Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed is my check, payable to "Jewish Peace Fellowship"

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Please provide your name and address below so that we may properly credit your contribution.)*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY / STATE / ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

*Below, please clearly print the names and addresses, including e-mail, of friends you think might be interested in supporting the aims of the Jewish Peace Fellowship.*

Mail this slip and your contribution to:  
 Jewish Peace Fellowship ☆ Box 271 ☆ Nyack, NY 10960-0271

Scott D. Sagan

## ‘Accidents Happen’ *How safe are our nukes?*



*Be Prepared: A Titan II missile.*

**E**RIC SCHLOSSER HAS WRITTEN A STRANGE AND POWERFUL book about the risks that an American nuclear weapon might go off by accident, through sabotage, or because of a false warning of attack. Strange because *Command and Control: Nuclear Weapons, the Damascus Accident, and the Illusion of Security* (Penguin) is really two books in one: the first is a detailed and moving account of a serious accident that occurred with a Titan II nuclear-armed missile in 1980 near Damascus, Arkansas; the second is a

---

SCOTT D. SAGAN is a professor of political science at Stanford University, a senior fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation and the Freeman Spogli Institute, and author of *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents, and Nuclear Weapons*, among other books.

comprehensive political history of US nuclear strategy, Cold War crises, and technical efforts in weapons laboratories to improve the safety and security of America’s nuclear arsenal. His book is powerful because the micro-accident and macro-political stories, repeatedly interwoven in consecutive chapters, reinforce each other by highlighting the improbability that normal, fallible human beings, working in normal, imperfect organizations, can somehow create an infallible nuclear arsenal, always available for use on a moment’s notice, but never without authorization.

The Titan II missile that blew up in the middle of the night on September 18, 1980, was the height of a nine-story building, filled with about eighty-five thousand pounds of rocket fuel and a hundred and sixty-three thousand pounds of liquid oxidizer, and tipped with a nine-megaton W-53

---

thermonuclear warhead. This warhead was the largest-yield hydrogen bomb in the American nuclear arsenal, more than six hundred times as powerful as the “small” atomic bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

The Damascus accident, like many others described in less detail in the book, began in a most prosaic manner. A twenty-one-year-old missile repairman, during “on-the-job training,” dropped the socket from a wrench he was using to remove a small pressure cap. It fell about seventy feet and ricocheted into the Titan II, piercing its skin and causing highly flammable liquid fuel to spray “like water from a garden hose.” Inside the silo, heat was rising to dangerous levels as volatile rocket fuel escaped, but senior officers at the Strategic Air Command headquarters overruled the local commander’s plan to open the silo hatch and vent the vapors into the night air. They feared that if the missile blew up with the silo hatch open, the warhead would be launched, and as Schlosser puts it, they “didn’t want a thermonuclear weapon landing in a backyard somewhere between Little Rock and St. Louis.”

Instead, two young missile mechanics — Jeff Kennedy and David Livingston — bravely entered the dark missile control center, now filled with deadly vapor, to find a way to stop the leakage. When Livingston flipped the switch for a fan, it created a spark that caused the vapor to ignite. The Titan II exploded, with enough force to launch the missile through the bolted nine-ton silo hatch. The nine-megaton warhead landed two hundred yards from the silo. The final arming mechanisms had not been activated, and the conventional explosives inside the warhead casing did not go off. Schlosser reports, with only a limited sense of relief, that “alpha radiation was detected directly on top of the weapon, but nowhere else on the complex.”

Livingston soon died from his injuries. And as often happens in organizations after a deadly accident, the Air Force soon blamed the victim, not the designers of the system or the more senior officers in charge of emergency procedures, asserting that Livingston had not been ordered to turn on the fan — a claim Kennedy strongly disputed, Schlosser notes. The Damascus accident and other incidents did, however, lead to many important safety improvements: the use of solid, instead of liquid, fuel for missiles, development of less-sensitive conventional high explosives to detonate the fissile cores of nuclear bombs, and sophisticated new safety devices, such as a strong-link/weak-link circuit breaker to prevent the detonation of a warhead if accidentally dropped or exposed to fire.

If Livingston and Kennedy are the heroes of the book’s accident story, the heroes of its larger Cold War nuclear history are the Sandia National Laboratory officials who designed the new safety systems and, over time, were able

to persuade high-level Pentagon authorities to have them placed into the US nuclear arsenal, often despite opposition from senior Air Force civilians and officers who feared a loss of military readiness. Senior Sandia engineers, such as Stan Spray and Bob Peurifoy, worked tirelessly for safer and more reliable weapons and fought against the parochial organizational tendency to cover up failures. “I believe that the Titan missile system is a perfectly safe system to operate,” the secretary of the Air Force told the press after the Damascus events, casually adding that “accidents happen.”

It may be tempting for some readers of *Command and Control* to assume that with the end of the Cold War and the advent of more modern, safer nuclear weapons, the threat of nuclear accidents has passed. But Schlosser demonstrates, powerfully and persuasively, that such belief is an illusion. Indeed, adding layering of safety devices and personnel checks can produce what I like to call “the problem of redundancy problem.” Each additional precaution makes a system more complex and encourages a false sense of confidence among its operators.

A recent case in point is the August 2007 Minot-Barksdale incident, in which six nuclear-armed Cruise missiles were accidentally placed under the wings of a B-52 bomber. No one double-checked what kind of missiles they were because everyone assumed someone else would do it. The pilots thought they were ferrying conventional-armed weapons from Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota to the Barksdale base in Louisiana. The plane sat on runways at both ends of its journey for more than twenty-four hours without the special armed guards normally assigned to protect nuclear weapons. If anything, Schlosser’s brief account of this incident underestimates the risks it posed. Had the B-52 experienced a problem in flight or crashed on landing, the pilots would not have followed the proper nuclear emergency procedures, such as jettisoning the Cruise missiles if necessary, because they had no idea what they were transporting.

What can be done? Schlosser ends by outlining the current debate between advocates of mutual nuclear disarmament and advocates of continued reliance on nuclear deterrence. He suggests a middle position: a “minimum deterrence” strategy that would require maintaining just a few hundred weapons. That is a valuable goal. The most important lesson of this powerful book, however, is that whatever goals or policies we advocate with regard to our nuclear arsenal, none of them requires that we keep more than a thousand nuclear weapons on a hair trigger. Schlosser’s account reminds us that accidents will happen and that current US nuclear policy too often appears to assume otherwise. ✨

*Reprinted from The American Scholar, Volume 82, No. 4, Autumn 2013. Copyright © 2013 by the author.*

---

**ILLUSTRATIONS: Cover & 10** • William Allen Rogers, courtesy of the Granger Collection, via Wikimedia Commons. **2** • Betty Merken. **3** • Ahmed Al Bazz/Activestills.org, via Yossi Gurvitz. **4** • Via Yossi Gurvitz. **5** • Via Kayla Zecher. **7** • Gord McKenna, via Scott D. Sagan. **9** • US Marine Corps, via Wikimedia Commons. **12** • Raymond D’Addario, via Wikimedia Commons. **13** • Wikimedia Commons.



William Astore

## The Business of America Is War

*Disaster capitalism on the battlefield  
and in the boardroom*

**T**HERE IS A NEW NORMAL IN AMERICA: OUR GOVERNMENT may shut down, but our wars continue. Congress may not be able to pass a budget, but the US military can still launch commando raids in Libya and Somalia, the Afghan war can still be prosecuted, Italy can be garrisoned by American troops (putting the “empire” back in Rome), Africa can be used as an imperial playground (as in the late-nineteenth century “scramble for Africa,” but with the US and China doing the scrambling this time around), and the military-industrial complex can still dominate the world’s arms trade.

In the halls of Congress and the Pentagon, it’s business as usual, if your definition of “business” is the power and profits you get from constantly preparing for and prosecuting wars around the world. “War is a racket,” General Smedley Butler famously declared in 1935, and even now it’s hard to disagree with a man who had two Congressional Medals of Honor to his credit and was intimately familiar with American imperialism.

---

**WILLIAM ASTORE** is a retired lieutenant colonel (USAF). He edits the blog [contraryperspective.com](http://contraryperspective.com), contributes regularly to [TomDispatch](http://TomDispatch), and may be reached at [wjastore@gmail.com](mailto:wjastore@gmail.com).

**War Is Politics, Right?** Once upon a time, as a serving officer in the US Air Force, I was taught that Carl von Clause-

witz had defined war as a continuation of politics by other means. This definition is, in fact, a simplification of his classic and complex book, *On War*, written after his experiences fighting Napoleon in the early nineteenth century.

The idea of war as a continuation of politics is both moderately interesting and dangerously misleading: interesting because it connects war to political processes and suggests that they should be fought for political goals; misleading because it suggests that war is essentially rational and therefore controllable. The fault here is not Clausewitz’s, but the American military’s for misreading and oversimplifying his ideas.

Perhaps another “Carl” might lend a hand when it comes to helping Americans understand what war is really all about. I’m referring to Karl Marx, who admired Clause-

witz, notably for his idea that combat is to war what a cash payment is to commerce. However seldom combat (or such payments) may happen, they are the culmination, and therefore the ultimate arbiters, of the process.

War, in other words, is settled by killing, a bloody transaction that echoes the exploitative exchanges of capitalism. Marx found this idea to be both suggestive and pregnant



*Major General Smedley D. Butler, USMC: 'War is a racket.'*



THE BIG STICK IN THE CARIBBEAN SEA

with meaning. So should we all.

Following Marx, Americans ought to think about war not just as an extreme exercise of politics, but also as a continuation of exploitative commerce by other means. Combat as commerce: there's more in that than simple alliteration.

In the history of war, such commercial transactions took many forms, whether as territory conquered, spoils carted away, raw materials appropriated, or market share gained. Consider American wars. The War of 1812 is sometimes portrayed as a minor dust-up with Britain, involving the temporary occupation and burning of our capital, but it really was about crushing Indians on the frontier and grabbing their land. The Mexican-American War was another land grab, this time for the benefit of slaveholders. The Spanish-American War was a land grab for those seeking an American empire overseas, while World War I was for making the world "safe for democracy" — and for American business interests globally.

Even World War II, a war necessary to stop Hitler and Imperial Japan, witnessed the emergence of the US as the arsenal of democracy, the world's dominant power, and the

new imperial stand-in for a bankrupt British Empire.

Korea? Vietnam? Lots of profit for the military-industrial complex and plenty of power for the Pentagon establishment. Iraq, the Middle East, current adventures in Africa? Oil, markets, natural resources, global dominance.

In societal calamities like war, there will always be winners and losers. But the clearest winners are often companies like Boeing and Dow Chemical, which provided B-52 bombers and Agent Orange, respectively, to the US military in Vietnam. Such "arms merchants" — an older, more honest term than today's "defense contractor" — don't have to pursue the hard sell, not when war and preparations for it have become so permanently, inseparably intertwined with the American economy, foreign policy and our nation's identity as a rugged land of "warriors" and "heroes." (More on that in a moment).

**War as Disaster Capitalism.** Consider one more definition of war: not as politics or even as commerce, but as societal catastrophe. Thinking this way, we can apply Naomi Klein's concepts of the "shock doctrine" and "disaster capitalism" to it. When such disasters occur, there are always

---

those who seek to turn a profit.

Most Americans are, however, discouraged from thinking about war this way thanks to the power of what we call “patriotism” or, at an extreme, “superpatriotism” when it applies to us, and the significantly more negative “nationalism” or “ultra-nationalism” when it appears in other countries. During wars, we’re told to “support our troops,” to wave the flag, to put country first, to respect the patriotic ideal of selfless service and redemptive sacrifice (even if all but one percent of us are never expected to serve or sacrifice).

We’re discouraged from reflecting on the uncomfortable fact that as “our” troops sacrifice and suffer, others in society are profiting big time. Such thoughts are considered unseemly and unpatriotic. Pay no attention to the war profiteers, who pass as perfectly respectable companies. After all, any price is worth paying (or profits worth offering up) to contain the enemy — not so long ago, the red menace, but in the twenty-first century, the murderous terrorist.

Forever war is forever profitable. Think of the Lockheed Martins of the world. In their commerce with the Pentagon, as well as the militaries of other nations, they ultimately seek cash payment for their weapons and a world in which such weaponry will be eternally needed. In the pursuit of security or victory, political leaders willingly pay their price.

Call it a Clausewitzian/Marxian feedback loop or the dialectic of Carl and Karl. It also represents the eternal marriage of combat and commerce. If it doesn’t catch all of what war is about, it should at least remind us of the degree to which war as disaster capitalism is driven by profit and power.

For a synthesis, we need only turn from Carl or Karl to Cal — President Calvin Coolidge, that is. “The business of America is business,” he declared in the Roaring Twenties. Almost a century later, the business of America is war, even if today’s presidents are too polite to mention that the business is booming.

**America’s War Heroes as Commodities.** Many young people today are, in fact, looking for a release from consumerism. In seeking new identities, quite a few turn to the military. And it provides. Recruits are hailed as warriors and warfighters, as heroes, and not just within the military either, but by society at large.

Yet in joining the military and being celebrated for that act, our troops paradoxically become yet another commod-

ity, another consumable of the state. Indeed, they become consumed by war and its violence. Their compensation? To be packaged and marketed as the heroes of our militarized moment. Steven Gardiner, a cultural anthropologist and US Army veteran, has written eloquently about what he calls the “heroic masochism” of militarized settings and their allure for America’s youth. Put succinctly, in seeking to escape a consumerism that has lost its meaning and find a release from dead-end jobs, many volunteers are transformed into celebrants of violence, seekers and givers of pain, a harsh reality Americans ignore as long as that violence is acted out overseas against our enemies and local populations.

Such “heroic” identities, tied so closely to violence in war, often prove poorly suited to peacetime settings. Frustration and demoralization devolve into domestic violence and suicide. In an American society with ever fewer meaningful peacetime jobs, exhibiting greater and greater polarization of wealth and opportunity, the decisions of some veterans to turn to or return to mind-numbing drugs of various sorts and soul-stirring violence is tragically predictable. That it stems from their exploitative commodification as so many heroic inflictors of violence in our name is a reality most Americans are content to forget.

**You May Not Be Interested in War, but War Is Interested in You.** As Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky pithily observed, “You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.” If war is combat and commerce, calamity and commodity, it cannot be left to our political leaders alone — and certainly not to our generals. When it comes to war, however far from it we may seem to be, we’re all in our own ways customers and consumers. Some pay a high price. Many pay a little. A few gain a lot. Keep an eye on those few and you’ll end up with a keener appreciation of what war is actually all about.

No wonder our leaders tell us not to worry our little heads about our wars — just support those troops, go shopping, and keep waving that flag. If patriotism is famously the last refuge of the scoundrel, it’s also the first recourse of those seeking to mobilize customers for the latest bloodletting exercise in combat as commerce.

Just remember: In the grand bargain that is war, it’s their product and their profit. And that’s no bargain for America, or for that matter for the world. ☆



### *The Challenge of Shalom: The Jewish Tradition of Peace and Justice*

Edited by Murray Polner and Naomi Goodman

Highlights the deep and powerful tradition of Jewish nonviolence. With reverence for life, passion for justice, and empathy for the suffering, Jews historically have practiced a “uniquely powerful system of ethical peacefulness.” *The Challenge of Shalom* includes sections on the Tradition, the Holocaust, Israel, Reverence for all life and Personal Testimonies. **\$18.95 per copy, plus \$5 shipping.**

## Murray Polner

# Hermann Goering, Dr. Kelley, And Nuremberg

**S**INCE THE 1930S SCHOLARS, SCIENTISTS, JOURNALISTS and ordinary folk have wondered why the Nazis could have committed so many ghastly crimes against innocent people and children. At times a few helpful insights arise from the killers themselves. One that comes to mind emerges from Gitta Sereny's mesmerizing interviews with Franz Stangl, commandant of Treblinka and Sobibor extermination camps, in her 1974 book *Into That Darkness*. Stangl was responsible for nine hundred thousand deaths. Sereny came away thinking of him as a run-of-the-mill bureaucratic careerist who saw victims as "cargo," while doing personally fulfilling work that brought him prestige and promotions. After Germany's defeat he escaped to Brazil where he was caught in 1967, extradited to West Germany, given a life sentence, and finally died of a heart attack in 1971.

More recently, Thomas Harding's impressive *Hanns and Rudolf* deals with Auschwitz commandant Rudolph Hoess [spelled Höss, with an umlaut, in German]. When tried for his crimes, he told the court that he and others like him were not merely following orders, as most captured Nazis claimed, but that their initiative was highly valued by their superiors and, he chillingly continued, he and his colleagues took great pride in their work. He was hanged at Auschwitz.

Jack El-Hai, who wrote the well-received *The Lobotomist*, offers another perspective in this forceful and absorbing book, *The Nazi and The Psychiatrist: Hermann Goring, Dr. Douglas M. Kelley, and a Fateful Meeting of Minds at the End of WWII* (PublicAffairs).

To find out whether fifty-two elite imprisoned Nazis were fit for trial as war criminals, the US Army assigned Captain Douglas M. Kelley, a psychiatrist, to examine them, a posting he came to view as an extraordinary gift as he developed professional relationships with some of them, especially with Hermann Goering [spelled Göring, with an umlaut, in German], Reichsmarschall, Luftwaffe chief and number-three man in Hitler's circle. Among the more prominent Nazis held were Hans Frank, governor-general of Poland; Rudolf



*German Reichsmarschall, Commander of the Luftwaffe Hermann Goering during cross examination at his trial for war crimes during the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg, Germany, 1946.*

Hess, Hitler's deputy führer, who had flown to England in May 1941 in a quixotic effort to bring "peace" between the two nations; Ernst Kaltenbrunner, of the SS; Robert Ley, who ran labor affairs; Joachim von Ribbentrop, foreign minister; Julius Streicher, editor of the pornographic anti-Semitic newspaper *Der Stürmer*; Arthur Rosenberg, the party's racial "philosopher"; Generals Alfred Jodl and Wilhelm Keitel; and Wilhelm Frick, Goebbels' man.

All this is well known. What is new in El-Hai's book is how much Kelley learned about some of them, especially Goering, whom he diagnosed as narcissistic, clever, dangerous and sly, but also personable. Surprisingly, Goering had an anti-Nazi brother and unsurprisingly was apparently a loving husband and father. Julius Streicher, repugnant and degenerate, despised Goering for his pretensions and arrogance, as did several other jailed Nazis, though they were probably surprised when he committed suicide in a Nuremberg cell with a cyanide capsule.

---

MURRAY POLNER is co-editor of *SHALOM*.

El-Hai was able to locate and study the extensive notes and records Kelley took home with him after his discharge from the army. His portraits of his other patients included the lesser known Swiss-born physician Dr. Leonardo Conti, who developed the euthanasia program to exterminate the aged and disabled, and who encouraged experiments on concentration camp prisoners. He escaped the hangman's noose by strangling himself, leaving behind a note expressing remorse for not having bid farewell to his family.

Kaltenbrunner, the highest ranking SS official in custody was, wrote Kelly, a coward, "a typical bully, tough and arrogant when in power, a cheap craven in defeat, unable to even stand the pressure of prison life." Robert Ley, who Kelley believed to be certifiably mad, also committed suicide in his cell. When Kelley's military time was up he was replaced by another psychiatrist, Gustave Gilbert, who had some different ideas about his patient-prisoners, viewing them from a greater emotional and medical distance. Still, both men tried to unravel the mystery of what made Nazi leaders do what they did and why.

El-Hai's chapter on "The Nazi Mind" summarizes various theories his subjects held and forms the centerpiece of the book. To Kelley, there was no single Nazi personality. Amoral and self-absorbed, they spent their working days "behind big desks, deciding big affairs as businessmen, politicians, and racketeers" while conducting the Third Reich's affairs, following orders, innovating, getting the job done, and being rewarded. Even so, since Kelley could offer no serious psychiatric confirmation of a common "Nazi mind," he retreated into the German past to understand what if anything was unique to Germany that allowed such creatures to capture and rule the nation. Otherwise, the prisoners were "normal men" who worked very hard and then returned home to their wives and kids. If they had a common mantra, it was that ends, not means, mattered. Other than Ley, "there wasn't an insane Joe in the crowd," Kelley once told *The New Yorker*. You could find their types everywhere, even in America, he repeatedly warned, worried that even America was capable of breeding similar brutes.

As if in confirmation, Gilbert's 1947 book *Nuremberg Diary* quotes Goering telling him during the Nuremberg trial that, "people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them that they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger, It works the same



*Defendants in the dock at Nuremberg: Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Wilhelm Keitel in front row.*

way in any country," a belief Kelley grew to share. "It can happen here," Kelley repeated over and over, even fearing the possible rise of a totalitarian state. In 1947 he told an Anti-Defamation League audience that he wished all politicians and statesmen could be psychologically examined before assuming office, pointing especially to bigoted Southern politicians.

While the prisoners sat in their cells, questions arose among outsiders about the best reading of the Rorschach tests the two psychiatrists had administered. Some approved of Kelley's conclusion that no

distinguishing "Nazi mind" existed. None of the prisoners were moral, he argued, but were instead psychopaths, with treacherous characteristics, much like Goering's. Gilbert and others believed the Nazi leaders shared commonalities of mental disease but saw the Nazis having flourished in a distinctive political environment and historical past to win a key election in 1933 and then crush all opposition and retain absolute power for twelve years.

Both men wrote books (Kelley's was *22 Cells in Nuremberg*) arguing their cases. El-Hai speculates that the crucial difference between the two "was that Gilbert's offered an explanation that self-righteous and victorious Americans wanted to hear. It caught the mood." El-Hai's explanation makes sense when he explains that, "Until someone else refutes it ... the Nazi personality that eluded Kelley, seduced Gilbert, and tempted so many other researchers is a myth."

At Nuremberg the defendants sought to assert their innocence. Exasperated and outraged, Chief Justice Robert Jackson finally heard enough and spoke out to the defendants and their lawyers: "If you were to say of these men that they were not guilty, it would be as though to say there has been no war, there were no slain, there has been no crime."

After two hundred and eighteen days, three defendants were acquitted, seven given prison sentences and Hermann Goering, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Arthur Rosenberg, Julius Streicher, Alfred Jodl, Wilhelm Keitel, Ernst Kaltenbrunner, Hans Frank, Wilhelm Frick, Arthur Seyss-Inquart and Fritz Sauckel (the lesser-known head of the slave worker empire) were hanged, their bodies taken to the Dachau ovens and cremated, and their remains dumped into a nearby river to prevent future neo-Nazi memorials and parades.

In an anti-climax El-Hai relates Kelley's stormy and intellectually restless postwar life, which ended sadly when he took a leaf from Goering and swallowed a cyanide pill. ☆