

SHALOM

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ADAM HOCHSCHILD

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“Enough!”

LIKE MANY OF YOU, I have recently read and watched more than I usually do developments around the world. Tornadoes, earthquakes and tsunamis, nuclear power plant and contamination fears, the growing death toll from protests in Arab countries, the failed peace process in the Middle East, the killing of Osama bin Laden, and of course, our own political circus in Washington, Wisconsin and elsewhere.

Other than natural disasters, it's all man-made, leading me to wonder again what are we pacifists to do — and think — about the endless controversies and violence that plague humankind? How do we keep our hearts in the right place? Where do we turn when so many celebrate doing serious damage to others?

My first response is often a feeling of alienation, even despair. Then, invariably, I turn to those who share a common understanding with me and seek to understand how and why violence and threats of violence are questions that continue to confront us every day. Such as: When will we get out of Afghanistan, Iraq and, now, Libya? These wars have

gone on much too long. We have lost far too many young military men and women, and too many civilians have died and are still dying. World War II only lasted five years. We have now been in Iraq for more than 10 years and many of our forces are still there. The Afghan war also seems endless, even though we have killed bin Laden. The Libyan intervention, has created the seeds of more violence, and on all three of these wars we are spending a vast amount of money that should be spent on our domestic needs.

There are those who have called on our representatives to push for an end these wars. Somehow, just knowing there are sympathetic people out there who believe in some way as I do is enough. But we need far more Americans to say, “Enough!” We need to be heard. Otherwise, silence means consent.

SHALOM is taking a much needed break during July and August. *We will be back in September.* In the interim, we'd love to hear from you and welcome your articles, sermons, letters, and even criticism. We can be reached at jpf@forusa.org. In the meantime, have a great summer! And please consider supporting SHALOM and JPF with a donation. ☆

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Nicholson Baker

We Don't Know the Language We Don't Know

ONE SATURDAY IN March I went to Lafayette Park in Washington, D.C., across the street from the White House, in order to protest several wars. The squirrels were out doing seasonal things. A tree was balancing big buds on the finger-ends of its curving branches; the brown bud coverings, which looked like gecko skins, were drawing back to reveal inner loaves of meaty magnolial pinkness. A policeman in sunglasses, with a blue and white helmet, sat on a Clydesdale horse, while two tourists, a father and his daughter, gazed into the horse's eyes. The pale, squinty, early spring perfection of the day made me smile.

The demonstration wasn't officially supposed to start until noon, but already off in the distance a few hundred people had gathered near a platform festooned with a row of black-and-white Veterans for Peace flags. It was March 19, the eighth anniversary of the shock-and-aweing of Iraq, and there was an air of expectancy: arrests were going to happen that day. I sat down on a bench and watched volunteers setting up loudspeakers. Birds were getting in as much chirping as they could before the human noise began. A woman with an armful of red and black signs passed by. Her signs said:

STOP THESE WARS
EXPOSE THE LIES
FREE BRADLEY MANNING

Jay Marx, head of Proposition One, a nuclear disarmament group, took the microphone. He was wearing a knit hat. "Testing, one, two, three," Marx said into the microphone. "Testing our patience. Testing, four, five, six, seven, eight years of war. Eight years of lies! And we're live! This

NICHOLSON BAKER received a National Book Critics Circle Award in 2001 for *Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper*; wrote *Human Smoke: The Beginnings of World War II, the End of Civilization*, and more recently, "Why I'm a Pacifist: The dangerous myth of the Good War," Harper's (May 2011).

park is live! The Vets for Peace are live in Lafayette Park!" (Cheering.)

Code Pink, a women's antiwar group, was in charge of the pre-noon proceedings. Jodie Evans, Code Pink's founder, sang "When we make peace instead of war," to the tune of *Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In*. She had on a black hat and a pink vest. She introduced a retired army colonel, Ann Wright, who had resigned her job at the State Department in 2003 because she couldn't countenance the invasion of Iraq. "I'll tell you, when Code Pink's in the house, you know it!" said Wright, to hollers of approval. She pointed across the street. "And the White House knows it!" Wright told us



that she had just gotten back from Afghanistan, where the Obama administration was building a \$500 million embassy complex. "It's going to be the largest embassy in the world — larger than Baghdad," she said. "As a retired colonel, as a former member of the U.S. State Department, and as a citizen, I say that it is our obligation to raise hell! To raise Cain! To get these endless wars stopped, and take care of America!" (Big cheering.)

I hurried off to buy some double-A batteries for my audio recorder and when I got back a group called Songrise was performing a heartbreaking a cappella version of John Lennon's *Imagine*. The crowd was bigger now, about eight hundred people. More police had gathered, too.

Caroline Casey, another patroness of Code Pink, came on stage to explain, in a strong contralto voice, what it meant to be advocating peace at the time of vernal equinox and lunar perigee. The culture of cataclysmic dominance was going down, Casey told us, and the culture of reverent ingenuity was rising up out of the cracks. She invited us to spiral the best of ourselves forth into what she called "the memosphere." She also offered a quote from Hafiz, a Persian poet: "The small man builds prisons for everyone he meets, but the wise woman ducks under the moon and tosses keys to the

beautiful and rowdy prisoners.” She tossed a figurative key to young Wikileaker Bradley Manning, [at the time] in solitary confinement in Quantico, as an agent of democracy, and she tossed a second key to President Obama, to help him see the wrong of Manning’s imprisonment. Obama was himself, she said, “a prisoner of empire.”

A GROUP OF Code Pinkers arranged themselves in a row and opened 17 pink umbrellas that spelled “BRING OUR WAR \$\$ HOME.” The crowd was up to about fifteen hundred people by now. A small but committed group of pro-defense protesters — eight of them by my count — were standing out in the street holding flags. Some of their signs seemed to date from another era: CHE IS DEAD GET OVER IT! (held by a woman in sunglasses), and JANE FONDA TRAITOR (held by a man in a black biker jacket). One woman, wearing a gigantic red hat with a red bow, had a sign that said:

I Stand 4
CODE RED, White & BLUE
NOT Pink & YELLER

I went back nearer the platform to hear some of the Vets for Peace speakers. Mike Ferner, who worked in a Navy hospital during the Vietnam War and was the author of *Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran for Peace Reports from Iraq*, was the master of ceremonies — he was an immediately likable guy with a thick asymmetry of graying hair. He introduced Debra Sweet, director of World Can’t Wait, another antiwar, anti-occupation group that had its beginnings during the Bush era. “We have to take a stand against these immoral, illegitimate wars, and this torture being done in our name,” she said. “I’ll see you in front of the White House!” (*Huge cheer.*)

Caneisha Mills, who had successfully sued the city of Washington for setting up military-style police checkpoints in poor neighborhoods, said: “The president of the United States, Barack Obama, said that he was going to make a change in the United States. The change that we’ve seen has only been for the worse.” Obama and the government were claiming, falsely, that there was no money for education and health care, Mills argued — and now he was calling for military intervention in Libya, even after Libya announced a ceasefire. “We can see that he only cares about wars of occupation and massive slaughter,” Mills said.

Zach Choate, injured in Iraq, read a Dear Mr. Obama letter, which he then rolled up and put in a pill bottle that had held one of the medications that he’s had to take since the war. “You said you would bring my brothers and sisters home, and they’re still there,” he read. “5,938 of my buddies have died. I’m here today to act peacefully in civil disobedience for my disapproval of these wars.”

I walked around the crowd and took some pictures of a six-foot-long scale model of a Reaper drone. It was painted gray, with wide wings and underwing missiles tipped with red and orange paint, and it was balanced on a pole above our heads. What would daily life be like, it prompted us to

ask, if we lived in a country where real drones were flying around high overhead, able to murder by remote control? It would be deeply radicalizing and terrorism-sustaining — obviously.

A WOMAN HELD a white cloth with lettering on it: “How Many Lives Will You End? How Many Billions Will You Spend? Before You End This Madness?” Meanwhile someone — I missed his name — began talking about the heavy “F.O.G.,” or Forces of Greed, which surrounded us. “President Obama — with his very lovely smile and lovely family, and beautiful rhetoric — sometimes fools people. Now we know that he’s part of the F.O.G. The F.O.G. needs to be lifted.”

A woman shook my hand and said “You are so familiar — have we been arrested together?” I said no, I’d never been arrested.

Ralph Nader was up eventually. He began with some words of sympathy for the victims of the disaster in Japan. Then he said, “General Petraeus said there are 50 al Qaeda, they estimate, in Afghanistan. Why are we blowing that country apart? Why are we sending our injured and sick home day after day?” Iraq, too — we’d blown that country apart. He quoted a coinage from a recent book called *Erasing Iraq*: “sociocide.”

Someone near me with yellow dyed hair abruptly turned his back on Nader and said “I’m still pissed off at that son-of-a-bitch about Florida.” Everyone else was clapping, though. How was it, Nader asked, that 25 or 30 thousand Taliban fighters, with no air force, no navy, no tanks — armed only with Kalishnikovs and suicide belts and rocket-propelled grenades — were able to resist the most powerful military force in history? “Because,” said Nader, “they have a cause that says ‘Expel the invader.’ Expelling the invader will be forever the cause of anybody in the world who is invaded.”

A duct-taped bucket came around for donations to Vets for Peace, and I stuffed in some money. Then Brian Becker of the Answer Coalition, a socialist group that sponsored some of the biggest peace demonstrations before the Iraq war, tore into the Libyan intervention, which had begun with the launch of a hundred cruise missiles that morning. “We have to learn the lessons that are so crystal clear, as Obama and the Pentagon and France and Britain prepare in the next few hours to start dropping bombs on the people of Libya in the name of democracy,” Becker said. “Let’s know this: Libya is the largest oil producer in Africa, and there’s no possible way that if the U.S. goes into Libya that it’s ever going to come out.” Libya must be the masters of their own destiny, he continued. “We ourselves reject the idea, fed to us once again, that U.S. imperialism, with all of its guns and bombs and missiles, is going to help an oppressed people. The only help we can give to the people of Libya and Egypt and Tunisia and Yemen is to make our own revolution right here!” (*Whooping and cheering.*)

Watermelon Slim, a craggy country blues singer and Vietnam vet in a camouflage T-shirt, told President Obama



spoke the language, but we knew the language that we didn't speak — that it was Vietnamese. We're fighting in a country now where we don't know the language we don't know."

Kings, Ellsberg said, once locked their critics away in dungeons till they were forgotten; the French, he reminded us, referred to these dungeons as oubliettes. Kings also once declared wars without parliamentary approval. Bradley Manning was now in an oubliette at Quantico for revealing America's war crimes; and the Libyan intervention was, like Korea, an illegal war, waged without Congressional approval. President Obama believed that he was in a throne room in the Oval Office, said Ellsberg, with a crown on his head. It was up to us to knock that crown off.

to listen up. "Mr. Obama, these wars were George Bush's wars," he said. "They are now your wars. I hate to say that, but it's a fact." Vietnam vets, Slim said, were now standing at the White House to make known their opposition, just as they'd done back in 1971: "Mr. Obama, you and Mr. Nixon got that in common. We're paying attention to you. We say, bring our brothers and sisters home, right now!"

Somebody gave me a flyer for the next protest, on April 9th in New York City. Somebody else handed me another flyer, "How is the War Economy Working for You?" It was published by the Veterans for Peace's Smedley D. Butler Brigade. On it was a quote from Marine Corps Gen. Smedley Butler (1881-1940): "I spent 33 years in the Marines being a high-class muscle man for big business, for Wall Street and the bankers," Butler wrote. "The general public shoulders the horrible bill in lives, shattered minds, and back-breaking taxes for generations."

THEN DANIEL ELLSBERG, former Marine Corps company commander and distributor of Vietnam War secrets, was on. He wore a blue blazer and a blue shirt and a sober tie. He was only a few weeks away from his 80th birthday. He looked great. "Can one person make a difference?" Ellsberg asked. "I would say that without Bradley Manning having released the cables through Wikileaks that inspired the uprising in Tunisia — along with the self-sacrifice of a Tunisian named Muhammad Bouazizi, who burned himself to death in protest against the oppression there — without either of those individuals, Ben Ali, our dictator there, whom we were supporting, would still be there. And Mubarak would still be in Egypt. So one person can make a difference."

Ellsberg asked us if we knew the names of the two languages of Afghanistan. Almost nobody in the audience knew. "The two languages are Dari — which is eastern Farsi, or Persian — and Pashto," he said. "In Vietnam, none of us

(Wild cheers, including Indian war-cry ululations.)

Ellsberg said: "One of the groups in Tahrir Square, that had been fighting Mubarak for some time, called itself Kafaya, 'enough.' We need an 'enough' movement: enough to empire, enough to imperial wars, enough to oubliettes." And he ended with: "This is a good day to get arrested at the White House, and tomorrow at Quantico." *(Mad applause.)*

Mike Ferner took the mic. "If you're planning on getting arrested, if you have any questions, Matt Daloisio is back here behind the stage. Come on up and see Matt." Once arrested, you had to pay \$100 to be freed, or else you had to appear later in court, Ferner advised. He introduced Chris Hedges, columnist for Truthdig, who said, "If you want to stop terrorism, you must first stop committing acts of terror." Ferner then gave us guidance on the march. "This is going to be a silent march," he said. "We need to keep in mind what we're here for, which is to observe the eighth anniversary of invasion of Iraq. We're here for a solemn purpose. So let's be that way, purposeful and thoughtful in our march." He thanked us for coming and then he said "I'd like to add one personal note to this, which has really been rubbing me raw for some time now." The people in Afghanistan and Iraq were bearing the brunt of the military aggression, Ferner said, while our cities, our veterans, and our public institutions, were all collateral damage. "Our infrastructure and our public institutions may not be being bombed, but they're being allowed to slowly rot. And that has got to stop."

The last speaker was Ryan Endicott, an Iraq marine veteran. He was full of powerful indignation, and he spoke at the top of his lungs. "When we joined the military, we rose our right hand, and we swore to defend the people of this country against all enemies foreign and domestic," he said. "And the biggest enemies to the people of this country do not live in the sands of Iraq. They do not live in the caves of Afghanistan." He gestured toward the White House. "They

live hundreds of yards away!” (*Roar of agreement.*)

Endicott said: “We know the realities of these brutal occupations, and we know that these people are not our enemies. The fact is that these wars have cost the American people more than just our lives and our limbs.” The wars had cost trillions of dollars, he cried — trillions that could have gone toward free education and health care, that could have prevented millions from losing their homes, and that could have helped thousands of homeless veterans get off the streets. “And that’s why we’re here today in the streets! The streets that we built! With our sweat, and our tears, and our blood!”

Revolutionary change was possible, Endicott believed: Harvey Milk, Martin Luther King, the people of Tunisia, the people of Egypt, had all made revolutionary change. “We’re going to shut down our workplaces. We’re going to shut down our factories and our schools. And we’re going to tell this government not one more dollar! Not one more bullet! Not one more bomb! Not one more day of U.S. imperialism!” (*Cacophony of applause.*)

People began arranging their banners and signs and assembling to march. “While everybody is waiting, will you please remove your hats?” said Watermelon Slim. “Except those of us who have chemical gear on.” Then he came to attention. “Present—arms!” He played taps on his harmonica, with a slow mournful vibrato. “We must mourn, we must also show our anger,” he said. “We must also bear this war evenly. Let’s go let them bear some of it, too. Come on.”

Then we marchers set out, led by a World War II vet from the 90th Infantry Division, Third Army. We walked silently around several blocks to the west of the White House (evidently the police didn’t want us to actually circle the White House), and then half an hour later, we massed where we’d begun, in front of the black, sharp-tipped White House fence.

There were many policemen now: motorcycle cops, park police, horseback police, K-9 police, and sinister-looking SWAT teams in black hats and black uniforms tucked into high black boots. It was a strangely varied festival of police “protection.” They were hauling out segments of a metal crowd-control fence. They locked together the segments, fencing off a large area of public sidewalk and street. (The street, Pennsylvania Avenue, is normally open to public foot traffic and closed to cars.) And then they announced that if you stood on the wrong side of the temporary fence you were going get arrested. The police created, in other words, a potential criminal infraction where there should have been no infraction. For standing on a public sidewalk, in a place where people had strolled undisturbed moments before, you could now be arrested for “disobeying an official order.” I decided that this was ridiculous and that I wanted to be ar-

rested. But after consulting my wallet, I realized that because I’d given \$40 to Veterans for Peace, I didn’t have enough cash to bail myself out. Next time, I thought.

More than a thousand of us stood against the new barricade, shouting, along with the hoarse-voiced bullhornist, “This is what democracy looks like!” And “Money for jobs and education, Not for Wars and Occupation!” And “Stop these wars! Free Bradley Manning!” And “From Wisconsin to Iraq, stand up, fight back!” And “They say more war, we say no more!” I suddenly felt the rising power of an outraged crowd. It has a different kind of persuasiveness than any verbal argument does. I watched a blind man in a wheelchair, missing several fingers, chanting “U.S. out of the Middle East, No justice no peace.”

A hundred and thirteen protesters were eventually arrested in front of President Obama’s White House that afternoon. (Obama, meanwhile, was down in South America trying to sell F-18 warplanes to Brazil.) The arrests took hours. Someone called out, “You’re arresting the wrong people! Arrest Bush I, arrest Bush II, arrest Obama!” One of the women, when she was out of sight in the arrest tent, began a series of blood curdling screams of protest. “Let us see what’s happening,” someone called. As a paddy wagon drove off, someone called out “The Jello’s no good in the slammer, don’t eat it.”

In the end the SWAT team had to summon two city Metro buses, in addition to the wagons, to carry off the detainees. Both buses carried ads for breakfast at McDonald’s: “Puts the A.M. Back in Amazing.” The police so parked the paddy wagons and the buses that the crowd couldn’t witness the arrests. As a man with a ponytail was pushed into the back of a paddy wagon, a woman in our crowd read from the Constitution, the part about how Congress cannot abridge the right of the people “peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.” I applauded her. There was no question that the police were denying the public the right of peaceable assembly.

There were cheers when Daniel Ellsberg, 40 years after his arraignment for leaking the Pentagon Papers, was led toward the arrest tent. He turned toward the White House, obliging a policemen who wanted to take his picture. His wrists were zip-corded behind his back. He flashed us a double peace sign from his cuffed hands.

When the arrests were all done, one of the cops collected some “Free Bradley Manning” signs and put them in a garbage bag in the trunk of his cruiser. ☆

April 8, 2011 9:15 a.m.

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Adam Hochschild

Where Have All the Graveyards Gone?

The war that didn't end war and its unending successors

WHAT IF, FROM the beginning, everyone killed in the Iraq and Afghan wars had been buried in a single large cemetery easily accessible to the American public? Would it bring the fighting to a halt more quickly if we could see hundreds of thousands of tombstones, military and civilian, spreading hill after hill, field after field, across our landscape?

I found myself thinking about this recently while visiting the narrow strip of northern France and Belgium that has the densest concentration of young men's graves in the world. This is the old Western Front of the First World War. Today, it is the final resting place for several million soldiers. Nearly half their bodies, blown into unrecognizable fragments by some 700 million artillery and mortar shells fired here between 1914 and 1918, lie in unmarked graves; the remainder are in hundreds upon hundreds of military cemeteries, still carefully groomed and weeded, the orderly rows of headstones or crosses covering hillsides and meadows.

Stand on a hilltop in one of the sites of greatest slaughter — Ypres, the Somme, Verdun — and you can see up to half-a-dozen cemeteries, large and small, surrounding you. In just one, Tyn Cot in Belgium, there are nearly 12,000 British, Canadian, South African, Australian, New Zealander and West Indian graves.

Every year, millions of people visit the Western Front's cemeteries and memorials, leaving behind flowers and photographs of long-dead relatives. The plaques and monuments

ADAM HOCHSCHILD is the San Francisco-based author of seven books, including *King Leopold's Ghost*. His new book, *To End All Wars: A Story of Loyalty and Rebellion, 1914-1918* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt), has just been published.



Austrian Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie on June 28, 1914 in Sarajevo. They were assassinated five minutes later.

are often subdued and remarkably unmarial. At least two of those memorials celebrate soldiers from both sides who emerged from the trenches and, without the permission of their top commanders, took part in the famous informal Christmas Truce of 1914, marked by soccer games in no-man's-land.

In a curious way, the death toll of that war almost a century gone, in which more than 100,000 Americans died, has become so much more *visible* than the deaths in our wars today. Is that why the First World War is almost always seen, unlike our present wars, not just as tragic, but as a murderous folly that swept away part of a generation and in every way remade the world for the worse?

TO PARIS — OR BAGHDAD

For the last half-dozen years, I've been mentally living in that 1914-1918 world, writing a book about the war that killed some 20 million people, military and civilian, and left large parts of Europe in smoldering ruins. I've haunted battlefields and graveyards, asked a Belgian farmer if I could step inside

a wartime concrete bunker that now houses his goats, and walked through reconstructed trenches and an underground tunnel which protected Canadian troops moving their ammunition to the front line.

In government archives, I've looked at laconic reports by officers who survived battles in which most of their troops died; I've listened to recordings of veterans and talked to a man whose labor-activist grandfather was court-martialed because he wrote a letter to the *Daily Mail* complaining that every British officer was assigned a private servant. In a heartbreakingly beautiful tree-shaded cemetery full of British soldiers mowed down with their commanding officer (as he had predicted they would be) by a single German machine gun on the opening day of the Battle of the Somme, I found a comment in the visitors' book: "Never Again."

I can't help but wonder: Where are the public places for mourning the mounting toll of today's wars? Where is that feeling of never again?

The eerie thing about studying the First World War is the way you can't help but be reminded of today's headlines. Consider, for example, how it started. High officials of the rickety Austro-Hungarian Empire, frightened by ethnic nationalism among Serbs within its borders, wanted to dismember neighboring Serbia, whose very existence as an independent state they regarded as a threat. Austro-Hungarian military commanders had even drawn up invasion plans.

When a 20-year-old ethnic Serb fired two fatal shots at Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife at Sarajevo in the summer of 1914, those commanders had the perfect excuse to put their plans into action — even though the killer was an Austro-Hungarian citizen and there was no evidence Serbia's cabinet knew of his plot. Although the war quickly drew in many other countries, its first shots were fired by Austro-Hungarian gunboats on the Danube shelling Serbia.

The more I learned about the war's opening, the more I thought about the U.S. invasion of Iraq. President George W. Bush and his key advisers had long hungered to dislodge Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein from power. Like the archduke's assassination, the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, gave them the excuse they had been waiting for — even though there was no connection whatsoever between the hijackers, mainly Saudis, and Saddam Hussein's regime.

Other parallels between World War I and today's wars abound. You can see photographs from 1914 of German soldiers climbing into railway cars with "To Paris" jauntily chalked on their sides, and French soldiers boarding similar cars labeled "To Berlin."

"You will be home," Kaiser Wilhelm II confidently told his troops that August, "before the leaves have fallen from the trees." Doesn't that bring to mind Bush landing on an aircraft carrier in 2003 to declare, in front of a White House-produced banner reading "Mission Accomplished," that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended"? A trillion dollars and tens of thousands of lives later, whatever mission there may have been remains anything but accomplished.

Similarly, in Afghanistan, where Washington expected (and thought it had achieved) the most rapid and decisive of victories, the U.S. military remains mired in one of the longest wars in American history.

THE FLOWERY WORDS OF WAR

As the First World War made painfully clear, when politicians and generals lead nations into war, they almost invariably assume swift victory and have a remarkably enduring tendency not to foresee problems that, in hindsight, seem obvious. In 1914, for instance, no country planned for the other side's machine guns, a weapon which Europe's colonial powers had used for decades mainly as a tool for suppressing uppity natives.

Both sides sent huge forces of cavalry to the Western Front — the Germans eight divisions with 40,000 horses. But the machine gun and barbed wire were destined to end the days of glorious cavalry charges forever. As for plans like the famous German one to defeat the French in exactly 42 days, they were full of holes. Internal combustion engines were in their infancy, and in the opening weeks of the war, 60 percent of the invading German army's trucks broke down. This meant supplies had to be pulled by horse and wagon. For those horses, not to mention all the useless cavalry chargers, the French countryside simply could not supply enough feed. Eating unripe green corn, they sickened and died by the tens of thousands, slowing the advance yet more.

Similarly, Bush and his top officials were so sure of success and of Iraqis welcoming their "liberation" that they gave remarkably little thought to what they should do once in Baghdad. They took over a country with an enormous army, which they promptly and thoughtlessly dissolved with disastrous results. In the same way, despite a long, painfully instructive history to guide them, administration officials somehow never managed to consider that, however much most Afghans loathed the Taliban, they might come to despise foreign invaders who didn't go home even more.

As World War I reminds us, however understandable the motives of those who enter the fight, the definition of war is "unplanned consequences." It's hard to fault a young Frenchman who marched off to battle in August 1914. After all, Germany had just sent millions of troops to invade France and Belgium, where they rapidly proved to be quite brutal occupiers. Wasn't that worth resisting? Yet by the time the Germans were finally forced to surrender and withdraw four and a half years later, *half* of all French men aged 20 to 32 in 1914 had been killed. There were similarly horrific casualties among the other combatant nations. The war also left 21 million wounded, many of them missing hands, arms, legs, eyes, genitals.

Was it worth it? Of course not. Germany's near-starvation during the war, its humiliating defeat, and the misbegotten Treaty of Versailles virtually ensured the rise of the Nazis, along with a second, even more destructive world war and a still more ruthless German occupation of France.

The same question has to be asked about our current

war in Afghanistan. Certainly, at the start, there was an understandable motive for the war: After all, the Afghan government, unlike the one in Iraq, had sheltered the planners of the 9/11 attacks. But nearly 10 years later, dozens of times more Afghan civilians are dead than were killed in the United States on that day — and more than 2,400 American, British, Canadian, German, and other allied troops as well. As for unplanned consequences, it's now a commonplace even for figures high in our country's establishment to point out that the Afghan and Iraq wars have created a new generation of jihadists.

If you need a final resemblance between the First World War and ours of the present moment, consider the soaring rhetoric. The cataclysm of 1914-1918 is sometimes called the first modern war, which, among other things, meant that gone forever was the era when “manifest destiny” or “the white man's burden” would be satisfactory justifications for going into battle. In an age of conscription and increasing democracy, war could only be waged — officially — for higher, less self-interested motives.

As a result, once the conflict broke out, lofty ideals filled the air: a “holy war of civilization against barbarity,” as one leading French newspaper put it; a war to stop Russia from crushing “the culture of all of Western Europe,” claimed a German paper; a war to resist “the Germanic yoke,” insisted a manifesto by Russian writers, including leftists. Kaiser Wilhelm II avowed that he was fighting for “Right, Freedom, Honor, Morality” (and in those days, they were capitalized) and against a British victory which would enthrone “the worship of gold.” For English Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, Britain was fighting not for “the advancement of its own interests, but for principles whose maintenance is vital to the civilized world.” And so it went.

So it still goes. Today's high-flown war rhetoric naturally cites only the most noble of goals: stopping terrorists for humanity's sake, finding weapons of mass destruction (remember them?), spreading a “democracy agenda,” protecting women from the Taliban. But beneath the flowery words, national self-interest is as powerful as it was almost a hundred years ago.

From 1914 to 1918, nowhere was this more naked than in competition for protectorates and colonies. In Africa, for instance, Germany dreamed of establishing *Mittelafrika*, a grand, unbroken belt of territory stretching across the continent. And the British cabinet set up the Territorial Desiderata Committee, charged with choosing the most lucrative of the other side's possessions to acquire in the postwar division of spoils. Near the top of the list of desiderata: the oil-rich provinces of Ottoman Turkey that, after the war, would be fatefully cobbled together into the British protectorate of Iraq.

When it comes to that territory, does anyone think that Washington would have gotten quite so righteously worked up in 2003 if, instead of massive amounts of oil, its principal export was turnips?

Someday, I have no doubt, the dead from today's wars will be seen with a similar sense of sorrow at needless loss and folly as those millions of men who lie in the cemeteries of France and Belgium — and tens of millions of Americans will feel a similar revulsion for the politicians and generals who were so spendthrift with others' lives. But here's the question that haunts me: What will it take to bring us to that point? ☆

— This essay first appeared at TomDispatch.com (<http://www.tomdispatch.com/archive/175387/>); then scroll down), and is reprinted with the author's permission.

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Jeremy Kuzmarov

The Lost War

FOR A LONG time, Afghanistan was considered to be “the good war” among Western pundits and intellectuals, a noble crusade against Islamic extremism which the Bush administration neglected in favor of the illegal invasion of Iraq. Slowly but surely, as the corruption of the Karzai government was exposed, as U.S.-NATO bombings repeatedly struck at civilian targets, and as the Taliban gained strength in the countryside, this image began to shift and choruses of dissent began to emerge.

Tim Bird and Alex Marshall’s book, *Afghanistan: How the West Lost Its Way* (Yale University Press), is the latest to challenge triumphalist narratives about the war being promoted in Washington. The authors, a lecturer at the Joint Services Command and Staff College at King’s College in London and a lecturer in war studies at the University of Glasgow, argue that after the ouster of the Taliban, the U.S.-NATO coalition squandered a small window of opportunity to engage in effective state-building actions capable of solidifying the new order. Shifts in subsequent military strategy consequently proved futile in containing the Taliban. The Western powers worsened the situation as a result of their lack of clear strategy and ideological commitment to neoliberal economic paradigms which have contributed to declining living standards for the majority of the population.

Drawing primarily on previously published articles and books, Bird and Marshall provide a valuable historical overview of the war in Afghanistan from the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001 to the recent Obama troop surge. They emphasize the perils associated with the U.S. strategy of supporting Northern Alliance warlords, many of whom built personal fortunes from the drug traffic and were implicated in serious human rights crimes during the civil war of the 1990’s. Hamid Karzai, the U.S.-NATO client, was a minor tribal leader prone to accommodating the



Afghan National Army soldiers prepare to enter a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter in Khowst, Afghanistan, April 14, 2007. The soldiers were undergoing training on how to conduct air assault missions.

warlords, with disastrous effects for women’s rights and the population at large. In military operations, the CIA played an influential role in buying loyalties and was prone to manipulation by local officials who provided false intelligence for bombing attacks. Five minutes before he received the call from U.S. envoys in Bonn that he was to be the Afghan leader, an American B-52 mistakenly dropped a 2,000-pound bomb on Karzai’s own forces, killing three Special Forces soldiers, three bodyguards and nearly Karzai himself. A few months later, a convoy of Karzai’s supporters and friends was attacked by an American aircraft, killing dozens.

U.S.-NATO efforts to build up local security forces have been especially catastrophic. The army became quickly dominated by ethnic Tajiks and was known for high defection rates and corruption. The police meanwhile extorted from the population, took drugs and even robbed banks. Because of a lack of sufficient funds, they at times interrogated people in their private residences — a telling sign of the failure of Western state-building efforts. Since around 2006, military specialists have emphasized the importance of population-centric counterinsurgency (COIN) strat-

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egies designed to win villagers' "hearts and minds." As Bird and Marshall point out, however, success in COIN is contingent on the legitimacy of the incumbent government as well as a larger cultural awareness and the ability of local forces to curry favor among the public, all lacking in this case.

Pakistan represents perhaps the greatest failure of western policy, as the U.S.-NATO coalition has helped to empower the army and intelligence services, which are sympathetic to the Taliban, and have inflamed the population by carrying out brutal reprisals on pro-insurgent communities. Predator drone attacks — whose success in targeting insurgents is estimated by the Brookings Institution to be under 10 percent — are supported by less than 7 percent of the population.

Bird and Marshall on the whole provide a well-researched chronicle of the failed U.S.-NATO war in Afghanistan. They raise serious questions about the viability of Western intervention and state-building capabilities, providing a cautionary tale as the West embarks on another potentially disastrous intervention in Libya. The authors state at the end of the book that the most basic lesson from the Af-Pak fiasco is the need "to think long and hard before embarking on attempting to reshape states and societies to make them conform to our whims," a point difficult to disagree with.

For all the book's strengths, there are a number of areas it could have been broadened. Absent from the bibliography is Malaila Joya's *A Woman Among Warlords* (2009), which details the terrible humanitarian consequences of the war for ordinary Afghans and deconstructs the myth that the war was about liberating Afghan women (as Laura Bush, Oprah Winfrey and even some liberal feminists originally claimed). Threatened with assassination for criticizing the government, Joya points to the importance of grassroots organizations such as the Revolution-

ary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) in defying the U.S.-backed warlords. University of New Hampshire Prof. Marc Herold's writings are also overlooked. He has done valuable work exposing the horrific effects of the U.S.-NATO bombing campaigns which have killed thousands of civilians and struck at least four wedding parties.

Bird and Marshall could provide a better historical perspective. The title of the book suggests a golden age of the West. Colonial interventions, however, have always been exploitative and engendered resistance among the subject society, pointing to a much greater degree of continuity from the past than the authors imply. The origins of the U.S.-NATO war should also have been more critically assessed. A recent study published by New York University points to long-standing friction between the Taliban and al Qaeda, which according to former commanding Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, has less than 100 fighters stationed in Afghanistan. If this is the case, then what is the war really about? While perhaps an emotional reaction to the 9/11 attacks, there are also underlying strategic objectives which the United States and Western countries have been pursuing in Afghanistan, including access to oil pipelines in Central Asia and the country's newly discovered mineral wealth, which the authors might have better emphasized. The war, furthermore, is based on questionable legality, having been fought without authorization by the United Nations Security Council, or court-sanctioned proof of bin Laden's role in 9/11 and his ties to the Taliban regime. In a just world, Bush administration officials and high-ranking military generals and their Canadian and European collaborators could thus potentially face legal censure for their role in the destruction of Afghanistan, which has been considerable. ☆

— *This essay first appeared at HistoryNewsNetwork.org.*

The American Empire – II

Murray Polner

A Secret Military Base

WHY SHOULD ANYONE care about 5,000 part-African, part-southern Indian Chagossians, who once inhabited Diego Garcia, a remote island in the Indian Ocean mid-way between Africa and Indonesia, who were exiled so the U.S. could build yet another military base?

MURRAY POLNER is co-editor of *SHALOM*. His most recent book (with Thomas Woods, Jr.) is *We Who Dared To Say No to War* (*Basic Books*).

Since the onset of World War II and its aftermath, tens of millions have been massacred by governments and assorted religious and secular fanatics. In that time, too, the U.S., the world's most powerful military force, has quietly expelled indigenous populations with the too-little contested argument that the world's "indispensable nation" possessing several thousand nuclear bombs has a moral duty to do as it wishes to defend its national interest, however ambiguously and broadly defined. Undeterred by Milton Eisenhower's pro-

phetic phrase in 1953 about a rising “military-industrial complex” about which his presidential brother tried unsuccessfully to warn us, why, then, should anyone care about Chagossians?

David Vine, an anthropologist at American University who was hired by attorneys representing the Chagossians to tell their sad story, does care and, with a heavy dose of revealing documentation, convincingly argues their case. His book, *Island of Shame: The Secret History of the U.S. Military Base on Diego Garcia*, is filled with rage at how



Diego Garcia

the British and U.S. governments stole a people’s home, sent them into foreign slums and then forgot about them. The purpose of this forced dislocation was to control the Indian Ocean and Central Asian oil fields, and to help carry out American wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Today, Chagossian-free, isolated Diego Garcia is “the single most important military facility we’ve got,” at least according to the military analyst John Pike.

Between 1968 and 1973, in an act hidden from the world and ignored by the press and TV and Congress and Parliament (the British retain nominal control of Diego Garcia, but granted a long-term lease to the U.S.), the two countries threw out the dark-skinned Chagossians to develop a major U.S. air and naval base.

David Vine was never allowed to visit the island — very few are granted this privilege — but he did translate relevant documents and materials from the French, Mauritian Kreol and Seselwa (Seychelles Kreol). His rage at what he rightly considers an injustice solely to service the American war machine is apparent in every chapter, perhaps best revealed in a striking and squalid but telling incident that occurred just before the final ejection of the remaining Chagossians.

“British agents and U.S. troops on Diego Garcia herded the Chagossians’ pet dogs into sealed sheds and gassed and burned them in front of their traumatized owners awaiting deportation” — yet another example of how imperial invaders exhibit their values.

Top secret (more so than Guantanamo and Bagram Air Force Base) and off-limits to all but a few very special visitors, Vine suggests that in addition to serving as a launching pad for bombing raids in Afghanistan and Iraq, Diego Garcia has been used for “rendition” of prisoners. He cites,

for example, British Foreign Secretary David Miliband’s admission to Parliament in February 2008 that the island has been used as a way station for shipping suspected terrorists to friendly nations (paid handsomely by U.S. and British taxpayers to treat prisoners as they wish). Vine also notes a Council of Europe report that the island has been used to lock away suspects. Verifiable details remain highly classified, since the Bush administration said nothing and the Obama administration, eager to prove its toughness in national security,

has thus far been silent about rendition, secret prisons and Diego Garcia.

The displacement of local people is hardly new and Vine catalogs many defenseless people such as the Inughuit of Greenland, the Bikini atoll islanders, and 3,000 Okinawans dispatched to Bolivia because of continuing American military expansion. Nowadays, U.S. military personnel are stationed in approximately 1,000 military bases outside the continental U.S. at a cost estimated to be more than \$100 billion annually. In Hugh Gusterson’s wonderfully descriptive words in the *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists* in 2009: “The U.S. is to military bases as Heinz is to ketchup.” Said one critic in 2007 — the leftist Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa — when asked if he would renew an American base’s lease, answered, only if “they let us put a base in Miami — an Ecuadorian base.”

And finally there is the plaintive voice of the exiled Olivier Bancoult of the Chagos Refugees Group, survivors who are still trying to return home: “We are the descendants of slaves. Our skin is black. We don’t have blue eyes. . . Whether we are black, whether we are white, whether we are yellow, we must all have the same treatment . . . Stop all the injustices that have been committed against us.”

It won’t happen, of course. The American Empire and its allies stand in their way. Vine’s seminal *Island of Shame* reveals just one of the multitude of injustices and cruelties always committed in the name of war and preparation for more war. ☆

— This article originally appeared in www.historynews-network.org/books.

Phyllis B. Taylor

The Mitzvah of Visiting Prisoners

MANY TIMES A week I enter the cell blocks of men and women incarcerated in the Philadelphia prison system where I am the Jewish chaplain and chaplain for the seriously ill and those facing charges of murder, rape and other very serious crimes. I am also available to their families, so I hear the heartbreak not just of those incarcerated but also those who love them. I am on the board of the Jewish Peace Fellowship (JPF), PVS (Prisoner Visitation and Support), and also EMIR (Every Murder Is Real), a grassroots group that provides support to the victims of crime. I know first hand the vital need for visits and mail to those behind bars.

Let me tell you about PVS, since the JPF is a sponsoring group. All during the year women and men travel many miles to visit prisoners as part of PVS, a nationwide visitation program that has appointed some 300 visitors to about 100 federal and four military prisons across the United States.

Most of the prisoners they meet are detained hundreds and sometimes thousands of miles from their families and friends, so they don't receive regular visitors and long for contact with people outside the prison system. At other prisons, volunteers visit prisoners in solitary confinement or on death row.

Prisoners often ask visitors why they come. For those of

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us who are Jewish, we consider visiting those in prison to be a mitzvah, an act of human kindness. "Whoever saves a life, it is considered as if he saved an entire world," says the Talmud, the record of rabbinical discussions on Jewish law, ethics and customs.

PVS, which is headquartered in Philadelphia and funded by donations from individuals, religious organizations, and foundations, began visiting prisoners in 1968 and today is sponsored by 35 national religious and socially concerned agencies. Visitors don't try to convert prisoners to their religious beliefs, but rather reach out and listen to them, offer emotional support and try to restore their sense of connectedness to the wider community. Prisoners often tell visitors that they help break the endless monotony of prison life, give them a window to the outside world, bolster their sense of self-esteem and encourage their personal development so they can better integrate into society after they are released. Since 95 percent of those incarcerated will re-

turn to society (more than 600,000 this year alone), this contact is vital.

PVS visitors, who are carefully screened and trained, come from a broad cross section of professions ranging from professors to lawyers and clergy to homemakers. Some are retired; others are still working. The program welcomes volunteers from all religious faiths as well as those who don't follow any religion. The visitors go to prisons without an agenda and let the prisoners determine the issues that are discussed without passing judgment.

Longtime visitors often see remarkable transformations in the prisoners they visit. Many set concrete educational and self-improvement goals while in prison with the determined goal of never being locked up again. A 2008 study by two professors from the University of Florida found that prisoners with regular visitors had almost a one-third lower rate of returning to prison than those who didn't.

As the Jewish chaplain in the Philadelphia prison system



and the JPF representative on the PVS board, I find that the act of visiting prisoners does not condone what the person has done, but it recognizes his/her humanity and hopefully contributes to rehabilitation. It also lets men and women know they are not forgotten.

The number of prisoners in the federal prison has increased almost tenfold over the past three decades to more than 200,000 prisoners. PVS will need to expand the number of visitors beyond 300 volunteers if it hopes to serve all those looking for friendship and human contact from the outside.

What can you do? Consider becoming a visitor. Also, since PVS relies entirely on voluntary contributions from individuals, congregations and other nongovernmental organizations to operate, please donate so our services can be expanded.

If you would like to volunteer as a visitor or make a tax-deductible contribution, please write to Prison Visitation Society, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102, or PVS@afsc.org, or visit <http://www.prisonervisitation.org/>. ☆

Readings

James Munves Why Israel?

“IT HAPPENED IN the days of Ahaz son of Jotham son of Uzziah, king of Judah: Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to wage war against Jerusalem...”

This is the prophet Isaiah speaking, 7:1. Read it again: *Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up to wage war against Jerusalem.*

It is possible that some of my Jewish brethren who read this may be astonished that the king of Israel, in alliance with heathen Aramites, made war on Jerusalem. It was a passage that stopped me in my study of Isaiah, and it is a portion of Isaiah that I doubt is much read aloud in synagogues where, as we know, our prophets' words, except as incorporated in the liturgy, sound only in the haftorahs. Perhaps, somewhere, a rabbi has made Isaiah 7:1 the subject of a sermon. Anything is possible. My general impression, though,



is that the idea of Jews killing Jews is not one that we want to dwell on. What was on Pekah's mind in attacking Jerusalem? Verses 7:5-6 tell us: "Aram, along with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has counseled evil against you, saying, 'Let us attack Judah and annex it to ourselves.'" In Kings II:14.14 we find Jehoash, king of Israel, looting the temple treasures, one of many such accounts.

The books of Kings and Chronicles are in large part accounts of Jews killing Jews. This begins with the rupture of Judah following King Solomon's death, with two tribes, Judah and Benjamin under King Jeroboam in Judah, and 10 tribes in the north under King Rehoboam. We read about wars between Israel and Judah, of dynastic struggles in which whole families of monarchs are murdered by ambitious ministers, not very different from, say, the Wars of the Roses. Neither kingdom receives a "good press." Both relapse into idolatry and pagan rites, although Judah comes out better, possibly because it was they who wrote the Tanach, much of it in Babylon during the captivity, the 10 northern tribes of Israel having been conquered and dispersed by the Assyrians and forever lost to history.

JAMES MUNVES is the author of *Andes Rising*, a non-urban Jewish novel about a bird-watcher in the mountains of Colombia, published by *New Directions*. He has contributed to *The New Yorker* and other magazines.

So why Israel? Why not Judah? Why call this new nation Israel? Why name it after a kingdom of Jewish idolators who made a habit of attacking and sacking Jerusalem and battering and robbing its sacred temple? (If one doubts, at this point, that such things occurred, and that there was a kingdom of Israel consisting of all the tribes except Judah and Benjamin, and with a capital Samaria, one has only to consult recent excavations of the palaces of the Omrids, the most successful and lavish of Israel's kings.)

The answer, my friends, is not blowing in the wind; the answer is that every nation arises from myths. Myths are constructed out of what we choose to remember and what we choose to forget. In the U.S. we choose to remember the Pilgrim Fathers and the pioneers in their prairie schooners. We choose to forget the massacre of the Pequots ("Those that escaped the fire were slain with the sword, some hewed to pieces, others run through with their rapiers," in the words of Governor Bradford); and we don't want to know about the exile of the Cherokees. Zionists choose to remember they are a chosen people, *am nivchar*, the exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan, and the glories of Solomon, and choose to forget fratricide and idolatry.

Myths inspire great deeds and unify peoples. They find expression in Manifest Destiny, the U.S. surging across a continent, and in the establishment of Israel in 1948. The downside: invasion of Mexico, massacre of bison, oppression of the

native Palestinians living in territories seized in the 1967 war. The City on the Hill is U.S. myth, the special nation, created to welcome the suffering from all over the world, the greatest nation ever known, unique. God Bless America! Righteousness! Destined to spread freedom and democracy throughout creation. Behind the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, behind the atrocities of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo, we find righteousness; as well as behind checkpoints throughout the West Bank, bulldozing of houses and orchards, bombing of Gaza apartment buildings. Righteousness is another word for Exceptionalism, the idea of being a special people, exempt from moral or any other law. Exceptionalism, as in the Nazi myth of Aryanism, justified Auschwitz; and has characterized the worst of American patriotism, and Zionism.

Jews killing Jews in Israel? One reason this is relegated to the memory hole is the frightening possibility that, with fanatical settlers in the West Bank and the increasing impracticality of apartheid, we could — God forbid — see a recurrence, and on a scale grander than the assassination of Rabin.

I suspect that the reason Ben Gurion and the other founding fathers chose to name their state Israel is that Judah is a cognate of "Yid," with its unpleasant associations, particularly for anyone from Eastern Europe. In selecting Israel, however, they unwittingly labeled themselves heirs to a state that was the opposite of what Judaism stands for. ☆

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