

# SHALOM

*Jewish Peace Letter*

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## **Bernard Avishai asks: Where Is American Jewry's Ed Murrow?**

Peter Van Buren

**Iraq: Mission Unaccomplished**

David K. Shipler

**The Other Vietnam Veterans**

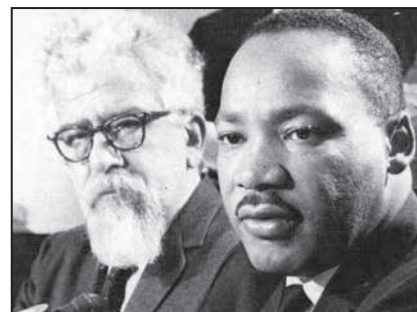
Murray Polner

**Vietnam: War, Bloody War**

E. James Lieberman

**Esperanto: The Language of Hope**

*Announcing*  
JPF's 2013  
**Abraham Joshua Heschel Award**  
*A Call for Nominations*



Stefan Merken

## JPF's 2013 Abraham Joshua Heschel Award

### *A Call for Nominations*

**T**HE JEWISH PEACE Fellowship is calling for nominations for its Abraham Joshua Heschel Award, given to an individual or organization that shows exceptional contributions to peace in the Jewish tradition.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907–1972) was a Polish-born American rabbi, one of the leading Jewish theologians and philosophers of the twentieth century, and an ardent supporter of social justice for all.

Among past laureates of JPF's Heschel Award are:

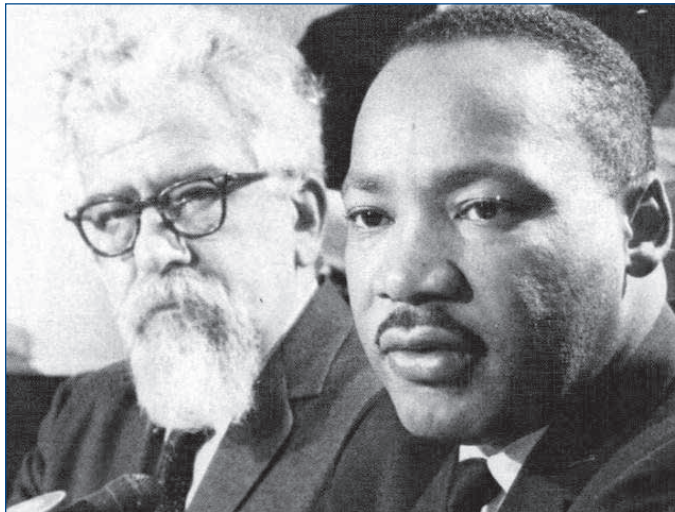
✧ Seymour Melman, for his pioneering work on the benefits of conversion from a war to peace economy

✧ Rabbi Bruce Cohen, for his role in Interns for Peace and work in Arab-Jewish cooperation

✧ Abie Nathan, an Israeli peace activist

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



*Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

✧ Jane Evans, a co-founder of the JPF

✧ Yehudi Menuhin, musician and international peace advocate

✧ Rabbi Arthur Waskow, for his peacework grounded on Judaism's teachings

✧ Rabbis for Human Rights, for their courageous and principled work in Israel

✧ American Jewish World Service, an international development organization motivated by Judaism's imperative to pursue justice

When making a nomination for the Abraham Joshua Heschel Award, please provide

the name of the person(s) or organization, along with a brief explanation of your nomination. News articles and other supporting documentation you provide will be read and appreciated.

Please send your nomination(s) by May 1, 2013, to: Attn: Stefan Merken, Jewish Peace Fellowship, Box 271, Nyack, NY 10960. ✧

## SHALOM *Jewish Peace Letter*

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Bernard Avishai

## Where Is Our Murrow?

### *The New McCarthyism of Jewish Organizations*

**I** AM JUST OLD ENOUGH TO REMEMBER GROWN-UPS speaking with disquiet about McCarthyism. The first thick book I read was Louis Nizer's *My Life in Court*, which was largely about Quentin Reynolds's libel suit against Westbrook Pegler, impresario of the scurrilous *Red Channels*. And I also remember feeling a certain pride in the very large number of Jewish liberals who, like Nizer, helped bring America back to its senses.

Let the galoots disgrace themselves attacking war-heroes like General Marshall. Let weird groups like the John Birchers and Daughters of the American Revolution and Republican Tafters impugn a man's integrity, then repeat each others' insinuations, then spread them to widening circles in captive media (where sympathetic pens were waiting). Let them point to the public doubts they themselves manufactured "out of whole cloth," as my father used to say. Jews, and Jewish organizations, knew where they stood in the face of such smears. They stood for fairness, patience, sanity. We knew for whom an unfair, impatient, insane America would not "be good for."

There was Fred Friendly, who collaborated with Edward R. Murrow in challenging McCarthy on CBS. There was Arthur Miller, whose 1953 play, "The Crucible," about the Salem witch trials, was a thinly veiled attack on the House Un-American Activities Committee. There was I.F. Stone who, forced to strike out on his own, proved the grandeur of the

First Amendment. There was *Commentary* magazine before Norman Podhoretz moved far to the right. In the America I knew, which only grew more so during the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, American Jews — with their worldly souls and experience of the social margins — were the natural opponents (because potential victims) of the fear, flocking, and fanaticism that produced political libels.

Which brings me to former Senator — and now Secretary of Defense — Chuck Hagel. I think it is time to acknowledge, bluntly, that certain major Jewish organizations, indeed, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations — also, the ADL, AIPAC, the AJC, political groups like the Republican Jewish Coalition, along with their various columnists, pundits, and Internet listserves — are among the most consistent purveyors of McCarthyite-style outrages in America today. Are there greater serial

defamers of public officials in fake campaigns against defamation? Starting with Andrew Young and the late Charles Percy, and on to Charles Freeman and (now) Chuck Hagel, the game has been to keep members of Congress and civil servants who might be skeptical of Israel's occupation and apologetics in a posture that can only be called exaggerated tact.

Fault Israel and you are accused of faulting Jews in our collective state or (the same thing) overlooking the venality of our enemies — things only an anti-Semite would do and, of all times, in the wake of the Holocaust. This is not a charge anyone in public life wants to suffer or try to deny. My Israeli friends love the old Borsch-belt joke that anti-Semitism means disliking Jews more than necessary. For American



*Edward R. Murrow, A Report on Senator Joseph McCarthy, See It Now (March 9, 1954): 'We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty ... we are not descended from fearful men — not from men who feared to write, to speak, to associate and to defend causes that were, for the moment, unpopular.'*

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**BERNARD AVISHAI** is adjunct professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and author of *The Tragedy of Zionism* and *The Hebrew Republic*.



Jewish organizations, the very idea that dislike is ever warranted is proof of bigotry, like Philip Roth's early novels were proof of "self-hatred."

AIPAC et al. know that if American politicians — and especially those fighting routinely for seats in Florida, Pennsylvania and Ohio — are not cowed by the fear of being branded as anti-Semitic they may not be embarrassed into backing Israeli actions ritualistically. Where is the shame and who is our Edward Murrow?

I won't presume to go through the credentials that made Chuck Hagel fit for appointment as Secretary of Defense; I saw and heard him in person only once. I also won't repeat or defend him against all the charges leveled against him. Others have done this better than I could.

Suffice it to say that Hagel is man of independent judgment whose views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict track pretty much exactly with those of *Haaretz*. He was a distinguished guest at J Street's first national conference. Nothing he has said has not been said by leaders like former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and intelligence chief Ephraim Halevy. Hagel is also a man who, like George McGovern, having served with distinction in the military, fears the unknown dangers of resorting to military force except as a last resort and without a clear diplomatic strategy. Thus he refuses to speak glibly about using force against Iran the same way he refused to endorse war with Iraq. Having earned a Purple Heart in Vietnam, he would also, in retrospect, have diplomatically engaged with the Viet Cong. Should he now disavow engagement with the Taliban or Hamas, for that matter?

Why should Hagel's stance be thought anathema to Jewish organizations? Let's get real. The latter throw their weight around, presumably on behalf of we Israelis, but really on behalf of the Israeli right, whose orthodoxy and pathos they relate to more readily than to Israeli peace advocates. The weight they have derives from their being able to hold American politicians to endorsing a "special relationship" with Israel, where special means unconditional, and Israel means the Likud's version of it, so that (as James Baker and Howard Dean discovered) even the desire for American "even-handedness" is treachery.

Hagel had the brass to call this grass green: Congresspeople will tell you openly that AIPAC has become one of the most feared, and secretly loathed, presences on Capitol Hill. Hagel spoke with thinly veiled contempt — which he came by honestly — of efforts by the Israeli lobby to intimidate dissenting diplomats and legislators. Ah, but he spoke of

the power of the "Jewish Lobby" — not the Israeli lobby — which was the opening the lobby's hallelujah chorus needed to brand him a bigot.

Funny: You disapprove of what Israel has become and you are told you are disapproving of Jews in the collective

sense; but when you call the Israel lobby "Jewish" you have crossed the line into anti-Semitism. And spare me talk about how calling the lobby "Jewish" gives, say, evangelical Protestants short shrift; without Danny Ayalon, the former Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister, as well as Israeli ambassador to the US, supposedly prepping him, Pastor John Hagee, the evangelical leader of Christians United for Israel, wouldn't know Hamas from hummus. (As if, in order to avoid being branded "anti-Christian," one dares to speak



*Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, en route to Afghanistan, greets troops at Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, March 8, 2013.*

only about Catholic and evangelical Protestant groups being "pro-life" instead of "anti-choice" on the issue of legally-sanctioned right to abortion.)

Will no one put an end to this dangerous creepiness? I don't mean someone who will simply speak in Hagel's defense (like the Omaha rabbi whose synagogue Hagel regularly visited, or *The New York Times's* David Brooks, who in a private letter to Peter Beinart, admitted that Hagel is not an anti-Semite). I mean someone who will reveal and condemn this moral extortion.

Where is the American Jewish Ed Murrow, a figure with the necessary gravitas among Jews and their "friends" to expose the Jewish organizations in question and tell them that their defamations have to stop; someone who will go on the offensive, specifically against this disgusting, AIPAC-inspired method of vetting politicians on some "pro-Israel" scale — someone who will denounce the lobby's ways of creating buzz in destroying the reputations of honorable public servants? The *Times's* Thomas Friedman has been commendably bold; but he has been "right too soon" on Israel for some time and thus lacks the credibility of, say, David Brooks.

So where indeed is Brooks? Why did he not gone public with criticism of the machine that besmirched Hagel? He claims to want many more Republicans just like the senator, and presumes to teach us in every third column about the dangerous foibles of human nature, especially when we humans seek cheap solidarity? Where is New York City's Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who is a lion for common sense when it comes to fiscal issues, climate change and guns, but can't seem to rouse himself to stop these disgraceful public campaigns carried out in the name of Jews? Where was Morley Safer or Bob Simon, of "60 Minutes"? Come to think of it,

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## Where is the American Jewish Ed Murrow, a figure with the necessary gravitas among Jews and their “friends” to expose the Jewish organizations in question and tell them that their defamations have to stop?

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where is John Stewart, our real Ed Murrow nowadays, who will take on the methods of Fox News, and imply peacenik positions on the conflict here and there, but otherwise cannot seem to get beyond Joseph Lieberman impersonations?

Some claim the attack on Hagel is the problem of deranged Republicans, and in a way it is. But that is like saying gun control is a Republican problem, implying that the NRA is just a natural feature on the landscape — as if there is no point figuring out where, given a tail and a dog, the wagging starts. No, this attack on Hagel started with the predictable Jewish organizations and pundits, who are now practiced at creating momentum for all kinds of attacks on the peace process. (Its latest initiative is to sign up congresspeople to, of all things, close the office of Abbas’ PLO in Washington — i.e., to punish him for taking his case to the UN, which the Israeli

peace camp generally endorsed.)

President Obama stuck with Hagel, but he cannot as president attack the power and intoxication of Jewish organizations, which have many Democratic supporters, any more than Eisenhower could simply attack McCarthy and Taft supporters and utterly divide the Republican Party. Any president must be a consensus builder and this one has an especial fear of divisiveness.

We did not take notice of attacks on the NRA until Republicans joined them. To have punch, the exposure of AIPAC and company must rather come from American Jews of the old school who have conservative credentials and something of a bully pulpit. This is their moment. The sigh of relief will be loud. And I know a great many Israelis who will join in. ☆



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Peter Van Buren

## **Iraq: Mission Unaccomplished** *The Single Worst Foreign Policy Decision in American History*

**I** WAS THERE. AND “THERE” WAS NOWHERE. AND NOWHERE was the place to be if you wanted to see the signs of end times for the American Empire up close. It was the place to be if you wanted to see the madness — and oh yes, it was madness — not filtered through a complacent and sleepy media that made Washington’s war policy seem, if not sensible, at least sane and serious enough. I stood at the Ground Zero of what was intended to be the new centerpiece for a *Pax Americana* in the Greater Middle East.

Not to put too fine a point on it, but the invasion of Iraq turned out to be a joke. Not for the Iraqis, of course, and not for American soldiers, and not a ha-ha joke either. And here’s the saddest truth of all: on March 20, as we marked the tenth anniversary of the invasion from hell, we still didn’t get it. In case you want to jump to the punch line, though, it’s this: by invading Iraq, the US did more to destabilize the Middle East than we could possibly have imagined at the time. And we — and so many others — will pay the price for it for a long, long time.

### **THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE**

It’s easy to forget just how normal the madness looked back then. By 2009, when I arrived in Iraq, we were already at the last-gasp moment when it came to salvaging something from what may yet be seen as the single worst foreign policy decision in American history. It was then that, as a State Department officer assigned to lead two provincial reconstruction teams in eastern Iraq, I first walked into the chicken processing plant in the middle of nowhere.

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**PETER VAN BUREN, a retired twenty-four-year veteran of the State Department, served in Iraq. A regular contributor to TomDispatch.com, where this article first appeared, he writes about Iraq, the Middle East, and US diplomacy at his blog, We Meant Well. He is the author of We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People. He is currently working on a new book, The People on the Bus: A Story of the 99%.**

By then, the US “reconstruction” plan for that country was drowning in rivers of money foolishly spent. As the centerpiece for those American efforts — at least after Plan A, that our invading troops would be greeted with flowers and sweets as liberators, crashed and burned — we had managed to reconstruct nothing of significance. First conceived as a Marshall Plan for the New American Century, six long years later it had devolved into farce.

In my act of the play, the US spent some \$2.2 million to build a huge facility in the boondocks. Ignoring the stark reality that Iraqis had raised and sold chickens locally for some two thousand years, the US decided to finance the construction of a central processing facility, have the Iraqis running the plant purchase local chickens, pluck them and slice them up with complex machinery brought in from Chicago, package the breasts and wings in plastic wrap, and then truck it all to local grocery stores. Perhaps it was the desert heat, but this made sense at the time, and the plan was supported by the Army, the State Department and the White House.

Elegant in conception, at least to us, it failed to account for a few simple things, like a lack of regular electricity, or logistics systems to bring the chickens to and from the plant, or working capital, or... um... grocery stores. As a result, the gleaming \$2.2 million plant processed no chickens. To use a few of the catchwords of that moment, it transformed nothing, empowered no one, stabilized and economically uplifted not a single Iraqi. It just sat there empty, dark and unused in the middle of the desert. Like the chickens, we were plucked.

In keeping with the madness of the times, however, the simple fact that the plant failed to meet any of its real-world goals did not mean the project wasn’t a success. In fact, the factory was a hit with the US media. After all, for every propaganda-driven visit to the plant, my group stocked the place with hastily purchased chickens, geared up the machinery, and put on a dog-and-pony, er, chicken-and-rooster, show.

In the dark humor of that moment, we christened the place the Potemkin Chicken Factory. Between media and VIP visits, it sat in the dark, only to rise with the rooster’s cry each morning



when some camera crew came for a visit. Our factory was thus considered a great success. Robert Ford, then at the Baghdad embassy and now America's rugged shadow ambassador to Syria, said his visit was the best day out he enjoyed in Iraq. General Ray Odierno, then commanding all US forces in Iraq, sent bloggers and camp followers to view the victory project. Some of the propaganda, which proclaimed that "teaching Iraqis methods to flourish on their own gives them the ability to provide their own stability without needing to rely on Americans," is still online (including this charming image, to the right, of American-Iraqi mentorship, a particular favorite of mine).

We weren't stupid, mind you. In fact, we all felt smart and clever enough to learn to look the other way. The chicken plant was a funny story at first, a kind of insider's joke you all think you know the punch line to. Hey, we wasted some money, but \$2.2 million was a small amount in a war whose costs will someday be toted up in the trillions. Really, at the end of the day, what was the harm?

The harm was this: we wanted to leave Iraq (and Afghanistan) stable in order to advance American goals. We did so by spending our time and money on obviously pointless things, while most Iraqis lacked access to clean water, regular electricity, and medical or hospital care. Another State Department official in Iraq wrote in his weekly summary to me, "At our project ribbon-cuttings we are typically greeted now with a cursory 'thank you,' followed by a long list of crushing needs for essential services such as water and power." How could we help stabilize Iraq when we acted like buffoons? As one Iraqi told me, "It is like I am standing naked in a room with a big hat on my head. Everyone comes in and helps put flowers and ribbons on my hat, but no one seems to notice that I am naked."

By 2009, of course, it should all have been so obvious. We were no longer inside the neocon dream of unrivaled global superpowerdom, just mired in what happened to it. We were a chicken factory in the desert that no one wanted.

### TIME TRAVEL TO 2003

Anniversaries are times for reflection, in part because it is often only with hindsight that we recognize the most significant moments in our lives. On the other hand, on anniversaries it is often hard to remember what it was really like back when it all began. Amid the chaos of the Middle East today, it is easy, for instance, to forget what things looked like as 2003 began. Afghanistan, it appeared, had been invaded and occupied quickly and cleanly, in a way the Soviets (the British, the ancient Greeks...) could never have dreamed of. Iran was frightened, seeing the mighty American military on its eastern border and soon to be on the western one as well, and was ready to deal. Syria was controlled by the stable thuggery of Bashar al-Assad and relations were so good that the US was rendering terror suspects to his secret prisons for torture.

Most of the rest of the Middle East was tucked in for a long sleep with dictators reliable enough to maintain stability. Libya was an exception, though predictions were that before too long



**American-Iraqi mentorship:** "BAGHDAD – Capt. Bobby Lumsden, an operations officer with 30th Heavy Brigade Combat Team, says he sees young Iraqis as "the future face of Iraq" at the reopened Al Kanz Poultry Processing Plant in the Yusifiyah region of Iraq, Jan. 10."

Muammar Qaddafi would make some sort of deal. (He did.) All that was needed was a quick slash into Iraq to establish a permanent American military presence in the heart of Mesopotamia. Our future garrisons there could obviously oversee things, providing the necessary muscle to swat down any future destabilizing elements. It all made so much sense to the neocon visionaries of the early Bush years. The only thing that Washington could not imagine was this: that the primary destabilizing element would be us.

Indeed, its mighty plan was disintegrating even as it was being dreamed up. In their lust for everything on no terms but their own, the Bush team missed a diplomatic opportunity with Iran that might have rendered today's saber rattling unnecessary, even as Afghanistan fell apart and Iraq imploded. As part of the breakdown, desperate men, blindsided by history, turned up the volume on desperate measures: torture, secret gulags, rendition, drone killings, extraconstitutional actions at home. The sleaziest of deals were cut to try to salvage something, including ignoring the A.Q. Khan network of Pakistani nuclear proliferation in re-

turn for a cheesy Condi Rice-Qaddafi photo-op rapprochement in Libya.

Inside Iraq, the forces of Sunni-Shia sectarian conflict had been unleashed by the US invasion. That, in turn, was creating conditions for a proxy war between the US and Iran, similar to the growing proxy war between Israel and Iran inside Lebanon (where another destabilizing event, the US-sanctioned Israeli invasion of 2006, followed in hand). None of this has ever ended. Today, in fact, that proxy war has simply found a fresh host, Syria, with multiple powers using “humanitarian aid” to push and shove their Sunni and Shia avatars around.

Staggering neocon expectations, Iran emerged from the US decade in Iraq economically more powerful, with sanctions-busting trade between the two neighbors now valued at some \$5 billion a year and still growing. In that decade, the US also managed to remove one of Iran’s strategic counterbalances, Saddam Hussein, replacing him with a government run by Nouri al-Maliki, who had once found asylum in Tehran.

Meanwhile, Turkey is now engaged in an open war with the Kurds of northern Iraq. Turkey is, of course, part of NATO, so imagine the US government sitting by silently while Germany bombed Poland. To complete the circle, Iraq’s prime minister recently warned that a victory for Syria’s rebels will spark sectarian wars in his own country and will create a new haven for al-Qaeda which would further destabilize the region.

Meanwhile, militarily burnt out, economically reeling from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and lacking any moral standing in the Middle East post-Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, the US sat on its hands as the regional spark that came to be called the Arab Spring flickered out, to be replaced by yet more destabilization across the region. And even that has not stopped Washington from pursuing the latest version of the (now-nameless) global war on terror into ever-newer regions in need of destabilization.

Having noted the ease with which a numbed American public patriotically looked the other way while our wars followed their particular paths to hell, our leaders no longer blink at the thought of sending American drones and special operations forces ever farther afield, most notably ever deeper into Africa, creating from the ashes of Iraq a frontier version of the state of perpetual war George Orwell once imagined for his dystopian novel *1984*. And don’t doubt for a second that there is a direct path from the invasion of 2003 and that chicken plant to the dangerous and chaotic place that today passes for our American world.

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

On this tenth anniversary of the Iraq War, Iraq itself remains, by any measure, a dangerous and unstable place. Even the usually sunny Department of State advises American travelers to Iraq that US citizens “remain at risk for kidnapping... [as] numerous insurgent groups, including Al Qaida, remain active...” and notes that “State Department guidance to US businesses in Iraq

advises the use of Protective Security Details.”

In the bigger picture, the world is also a far more dangerous place than it was in 2003. Indeed, for the State Department, which sent me to Iraq to witness the follies of empire, the world has become ever more daunting. In 2003, at that infamous “mission accomplished” moment, only Afghanistan was on the list of overseas embassies that were considered “extreme danger posts.” Soon enough, however, Iraq and Pakistan were added. Today, Yemen and Libya, once boring but secure outposts for State’s officials, now fall into the same category.

Other places once considered safe for diplomats and their families, such as Syria and Mali, have been evacuated and have no American diplomatic presence at all. Even sleepy Tunisia, once calm enough that the State Department had its Arabic language school there, is now on reduced staff with no diplomatic family members resident. Egypt teeters.

The Iranian leadership watched carefully as the American imperial version of Iraq collapsed, concluded that Washington was a paper tiger, backed away from initial offers to talk over contested issues, and instead (at least for a while) doubled-down on achieving nuclear breakout capacity, aided by the past work of that same A.Q. Khan network. North Korea, another A.Q. Khan beneficiary, followed the same pivot ever farther from Washington, while it became a genuine nuclear power. Its neighbor China pursued its own path of economic dominance, while helping to “pay” for the Iraq War by becoming the number-one holder of US debt among foreign governments. It now owns more than twenty-one percent of the US debt held overseas.

And don’t put away the joke book just yet. Subbing as apologist-in-chief for an absent George W. Bush and the top officials of his administration on this tenth anniversary, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair recently reminded us that there is more on the horizon. Conceding that he had “long since given up trying to persuade people Iraq was the right decision,” Blair added that new crises are looming. “You’ve got one in Syria right now, you’ve got one in Iran to come,” he said. “We are in the middle of this struggle, it is going to take a generation, it is going to be very arduous and difficult. But I think we are making a mistake, a profound error, if we think we can stay out of that struggle.”

Think of his comment as a warning. Having somehow turned much of Islam into a foe, Washington has essentially assured itself of never-ending crises that it stands no chance whatsoever of winning. In this sense, Iraq was not an aberration, but the historic zenith *and* nadir for a way of thinking that is only now slowing waning. For decades to come, the US will have a big enough military to ensure that our decline is slow, bloody, ugly and reluctant, if inevitable. One day, however, even the drones will have to land.

And so, happy tenth anniversary, Iraq War! A decade after the invasion, a chaotic and unstable Middle East is the unfinished legacy of our invasion. I guess the joke is on us after all, though no one is laughing. ✨

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## Murray Polner

# War, Bloody War

**T**HE MASSACRE OF CIVILIAN VILLAGERS IN MY LAI, Vietnam, on March 16, 1968, became to a growing minority of Americans a symbol of the moral morass of the Vietnam War. Elderly men, women, children, toddlers, and family animals, were slaughtered by rampaging US soldiers of Charlie Company, First Battalion, Eleventh Infantry. The intrepid Seymour Hersh first broke the story for the Dispatch News Service, hardly a major news outlet. That incident was by no means the only murder of civilians in that war; our South Korean allies and Vietnamese North and South were especially brutal.

If anything positive emerged it was that a few American soldiers dared to denounce the assassins and their military and civilian defenders. One of them is in William Thomas Allison's first-rate *My Lai — An American Atrocity in the Vietnam War* (Johns Hopkins University Press). Captain Aubrey Daniel was an army lawyer who successfully prosecuted Lieutenant William Calley, the only defendant convicted. Daniel became enraged when President Nixon released Calley from prison pending his appeal. In a letter written in April 1970 to the president, Daniel charged that by such an act the president had damaged the military's judicial process and helped boost the image of Calley "as a national hero," thus lending credibility to millions who believed the murders were inevitable, if not justified, during wartime. Sickened, Daniel's letter continued: "...how shocking it is if so many people across the nation have failed to see the moral issue which was involved in the trial of Lieutenant Calley — that it is unlawful for an American soldier to summarily execute unarmed and unresisting men, women, children and babies."

Many prowar Americans saw Calley as the scapegoat in a frustrating war supposedly against communism's expansion into Southeast Asia and even beyond. A recording entitled

"The Battle Hymn of Lieutenant Calley" sold two hundred thousand copies in three days.

With this in mind, Daniel lectured Nixon in a tone rarely heard publicly when a military subordinate addresses his very powerful boss: "I would expect that the president of the US, a man who I believed should and would provide the moral leadership for this nation, would stand fully behind the law of this land on a moral issue about which there can be no compromise." This, of course, was before it became patently ridiculous to include "moral leadership" and Richard Nixon in the same sentence.

Allison, a professor of history at Georgia Southern University and previously author of *Military Justice in Vietnam: The Rule of Law in an American War* (University Press of

Kansas, 2006) has written a succinct and impressive summation of what happened on March 16, 1968, and after. He doesn't offer much that is new, but the book is nonetheless replete with facts, insights and perspective that should make it required reading in high schools and colleges, where knowledge of what happened in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in the Sixties and Seventies is barely known.

Allison, whose father was a Vietnam vet, considers some of the 58,282 US troops killed in the war: "A draftee was two times more likely to be killed in Vietnam than an enlistee." Meanwhile, "The burden of service largely fell upon young working-class Americans, African-Americans in particular, who could not afford to enroll in college or otherwise get a deferment." Unstated was that, according to *Congressional Quarterly* years ago, only fourteen members of Congress had close family members in the military during the war. The same was true of fathers in the Executive and Judicial Branches. Nor for that matter did the draft prevent or shorten the war. No wonder that Allison opens the book with a pithy and relevant quote from Sophocles: "War loves to seek its victims in the young."

Relying in part on army and congressional testimony,



*My Lai, Vietnam, March 16, 1968*

MURRAY POLNER is co-editor of SHALOM.

Allison's judgment is that My Lai's "sheer brutality ... staggers the imagination." The book is enhanced by gripping photographs of the massacre taken by army photographer Ron Haeberle. One of them depicts women and children terrified while the killing proceeds, and another shows the dead. Informed that the Vietnamese villages of My Lai and neighboring Son My were hotbeds of embedded Viet Cong, the carnage led to shootings, torture, mutilations, rape and sodomy. Revisiting the wanton savagery cannot but remind a reader, even if on a far lesser scale, of SS death squads roaming the Ukrainian countryside and murdering any and all Jews they found.

Along with Captain Aubrey Daniel there were other authentic heroes serving in Vietnam. Warrant Office Hugh Thompson was flying overhead in his helicopter. When he and crew chief SP4 Glen Andreotta and gunner SP4 Larry Colburn witnessed the slaughter, Thompson landed his helicopter, climbed out and, spotting a group of troops getting ready to kill even more, told Colburn and Andreotta (who was killed in action three weeks later) to start firing if any of them shot at him or the villagers. By his astonishing act he rescued eleven Vietnamese and possibly saved countless others when he threatened to shoot more Americans still menacing villagers. Allison's description of the butchery and the bravery of Thompson and his crew members' roles are riveting. Another helicopter pilot, Lieutenant Brian Livingston, who helped Thompson evacuate the refugees, wrote his wife: "I tell you something it sure makes me wonder why we are here." (See Trent Angers' biography, *The Forgotten Hero of My Lai: The Hugh Thompson Story*, published by Arcadian in 1999.)

Yet another man of honor was Ron Ridenhour, also a Vietnam vet, who had heard about the story from eyewitnesses. Once he found their stories to be true, he wrote dozens of letters in March 1969 to Washington politicians, saying that "something dark and bloody did indeed occur sometime in March, 1968 in a village called Pinkville" — the name used by American forces — and called for an investigation. He ended up quoting Churchill: "A country without a conscience is a country without a soul, and a country without a soul is a country that cannot survive."

There were extensive behind-the-scenes efforts to cover



*Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson*

up what had happened in Vietnam. Certainly, General William Westmoreland's decision to rely on overwhelming American destructive power never succeeded. Nor did the White House's reliance on extensive bombing succeed in bringing Hanoi to its knees. What these actions did was to obliterate Laos's Plain of Jars and wreak havoc on Laos, which was on the receiving end of some 2.1 million tons of bombs, "more than the total tonnage dropped by the US in the European and Pacific theaters in World War II," according to *The Encyclopedia of the Vietnam War* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

The Pentagon, still fighting the Second World War, was at a loss coping with a nationalist guerilla force. Allison complains that Westmoreland, who backed search-and-destroy missions and body counts, was "Ever willing to take credit and protect his reputation at the expense of others."

However, after the disclosures about My Lai, Westmoreland insisted on a full inquiry and threatened to appeal personally to President Nixon to allow the investigation to continue unhindered. In the end, Allison notes, My Lai "further tarnished Westmoreland's much-coveted reputation," just as it did the Pentagon and the Nixon White House, none of whose prime movers were ever held accountable. Nick Turse's new book, *Kill Anything That Moves: The Real American War in Vietnam*, published by Metropolitan Books, reveals that My Lai was no isolated event and many more were killed and brutalized. Vietnam vet Tim O'Brien, who wrote the memorable *The Things They Carried*, blurbed Turse's book as "not only a compendium of pervasive and illegal and sickening savagery toward Vietnamese civilians but ... also a record of repetitive deceit and cover-ups on the part of high-ranking officers and officials."

All the same, it was Westmoreland, Major General Kenneth Hodgson and Colonel William V. Wilson and a few others inside the officer corps who supported a full-scale investigation. And to his credit, Westmoreland appointed Lieutenant General William Peers, who had entered the army via the Reserve Officers' Training Corps at UCLA, to lead the inquiry, for which he was probably denied a fourth star due to his truthful findings. When his friend and protector Westmoreland retired, Peers did the same. And once Calley was convicted and soon released, My Lai quickly became a relic of the past, and on to our next war and the one after that and the ones after that... ☆

David K. Shipler

## The Other Veterans

**W**ITH JOHN KERRY NOW SECRETARY OF STATE and former Senator Chuck Hagel now Secretary of Defense, much is being made of the breakthrough they represent: This is the first time that veterans of the Vietnam War will have occupied those two senior cabinet positions. These men, each sobered in his own way by combat, know the miseries of warfare, and seem to have absorbed their lessons.

But outside the glare of this spotlight on uniformed veterans, there are other Americans, those who went to Vietnam out of uniform, who also saw the miseries close at hand as they tried to do some good for ordinary people. I have watched recently as a far-flung community of those invisible Vietnam vets has connected by Internet because one of them is dying. They are sharing reminiscences, writing about the traumas they still carry, and reaffirming the moral opposition to the war that moved them to activism decades ago.

Some avoided the war by persuading their draft boards they were Conscientious Objectors, and then went to Vietnam anyway, in civilian clothes and unarmed.

Most of them learned to speak Vietnamese fluently. They taught in schools, treated children who had lost limbs, supported political prisoners and their families, wrote newsletters about what they witnessed, and opened doors for journalists and members of Congress. Returning home with vivid portrayals of suffering in Vietnam, some became leaders in an antiwar movement that grew into a significant counterweight to the advocates of war.

It is wise to remember, in this age of deep polarization, how angrily the US was torn into strident factions over the justice or the injustice of the war, over its high purpose or low inhumanity. The truth looked absolute, especially at a

distance. Just before I went to Saigon as a *New York Times* correspondent in 1973, someone told me — I can't remember who — that there were two kinds of Americans: those who had been in Vietnam, and those who had not.

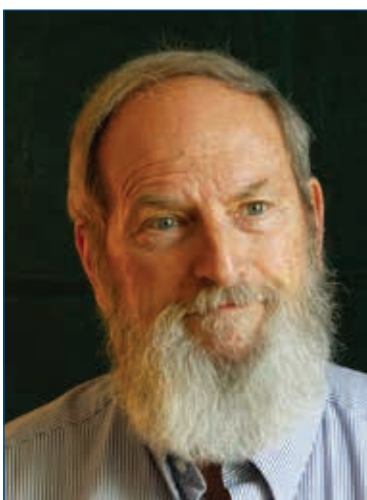
There was something to that, but I was soon to recognize that those who were there were of many kinds. Indeed, in parts of the world where conflict exists, you can usually find Americans across a broad spectrum. There are mercenaries and contractors, smugglers and spies, diplomats and journalists, Americans there to make money in legitimate business and Americans there to provide humanitarian as-

sistance in many forms. They have different truths. And so it was in Vietnam, a place of such complexity that a colleague once advised me, only half joking: Even what you see with your own eyes is a rumor.

Still, this circle of activists, now gathered around the virtual bedside of my friend, seems to possess an unyielding clarity of vision. If I may read between the lines, an assumption runs through the recollections that virtue rested with the Viet Cong — known in this milieu as the National Liberation Front, or NLF — that it was the true voice of the people, the authentic movement for ... well ... liberation.

It is accurate that the North Vietnamese Communists and their indigenous movement in the South were fighting for independence from foreign domination, a kind of continuation of their anticolonial war against the French. But as I now read some of the Americans' e-mails, I'm taken back to the uncomfortable puzzlement I felt at the time, watching many on the left somehow unable to oppose warmaking by the US without approving of it by the North Vietnamese and the NLF, whose violence and atrocities are glossed over or rationalized. Must there always be a virtuous side in a war?

My friend John Spragens, who is dying of pancreatic cancer, first went to Vietnam as a schoolteacher in the 1960s, then returned in the early 1970s as a freelance journalist, photographer and translator. After he sent a letter to friends in November about his diagnosis, the e-mails poured in, and he set up an Internet listserve on which we converse with



David K. Shipler

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DAVID K. SHIPLER reported from Saigon for *The New York Times* from 1973 to 1975. His latest books are two companion volumes on civil liberties: *The Rights of the People: How Our Search for Safety Invades Our Liberties* and *Rights at Risk: The Limits of Liberty in Modern America*.



him and one another, as if in a great global reunion. He is still with us, but fading.

The community is bound by several strands, one of which — International Voluntary Services — was created by Quakers, Mennonites, and Brethren, which sent Americans to South Vietnam and other Third World countries beginning in the 1950s. Building houses, helping clear land for agriculture, teaching school, the volunteers saw the developing war and its devastation, and many became vocal opponents.

This came with a cost to some. One of this circle's members, Tom Fox, a Vietnamese-speaker who did volunteer work there and later became a journalist, contributed this:

"Just finished reading Nick Turse's book, *Kill Anything that Moves*. Warning: It is an unsettling and deeply emotional experience. I found myself tearing up, even gagging at times, as I turned the pages. Long buried memories will be torn open anew. I experienced more than bitter sadness; I felt the anger again, and maybe most of all I felt the loneliness. You know the feeling. It was the result of having experienced so much as such a young age and then feeling there was no way to share it. It was also the result of knowing we were failing to persuade others to listen, to care, to act with us to end the madness and killings. The loneliness of which I speak, the loneliness we felt for so long, finally stemmed from a failure to be the bridges of understanding we set out to be. Our passions, our love for the Vietnamese people we had come to know, imprisoned us for lifetimes. The war made those chains all the heavier. How could we ever share, except with each other that which was shaping the people we were becoming, lonely witnesses to something so, so much larger than ourselves? How could we not have become lost?

"... As the anti-war movement grew in the US there seemed to be more refuge for us, but the cause to end the war, to end the killings, was infinitely more personal to us, as we

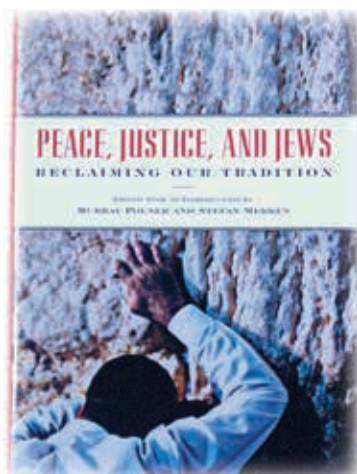
knew Vietnamese families, many of them living relatives of victims of the war. We had seen suffering and death, we had smelled the burnt flesh, saw the mutilated bodies, witnessed the racism of young fearful, lost men in a foreign land. ...

"For many years, upon returning from Vietnam I could not — would not — stand at an athletic event to sing the national anthem. I could not salute the flag I had seen painted on the bottom of the wings of the fighter bombers taking off day and night from the Tuy Hoa air base to bomb the farmers and flatten villages in Phu Yen, farmers who would then become refugees, sometimes thousands at a time, who would walk distances to be 'resettled' on sand along the coast where I was to somehow provide assistance. As one IVS colleague said at the time: 'We were the Band-Aids on the genocide.' Yes, but we were more. We were witnesses. Each of us saw pieces of the whole and together we collectively saw enough to help energize the anti-war movement back home. But in the process we became branded for the rest of our lives, outcasts of sorts, victims of too much knowledge. We could never ever fully fit in to American society again. ...

"So like the sad soldiers who fought and lived through Vietnam, we too returned suffering levels of post-traumatic shock. How could it be otherwise? But unlike veterans groups and veterans hospitals we did not have those nationally sponsored support groups. We were the young idealists, those who did not carry guns, indeed, opposed using weapons. We were the young idealists who wanted to make a difference, somehow change the world. We knew the complexities. ... We learned the language, bonded with the people and grew to prize their culture. ...

"I am writing this, now, because I feel those who are reading this, friends of John, understand. You are part of the community of loneliness." ☆

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E. James Lieberman

## A Language of Hope

**L**UDOVIC LAZAR ZAMENHOF, MD (1859–1917) IS HONORED best by those who speak his language. Soon after its publication in Russia, in 1887, *Lingvo Internacia*, became known by its author's pseudonym — Dr. Esperanto: the “hoping one,” from *es-peri*, to hope. His linguistic prescription for peace is the only one of many such projects to come alive. A Jewish ophthalmologist in Warsaw, Zamenhof hoped to transcend communication barriers in the service of ideals expressed by Hillel two thousand years ago.

The first of eight children, Zamenhof grew up in Bialystok, where Poles, Russians, Germans and Jews lived together but not in harmony. (The city was the largest in the world with a majority Jewish population). As a boy he learned from his parents and his religion that all men are brothers but, in the streets, voices with different accents were raised against one another. Multilingual, smart, idealistic and likeable, Zamenhof sensed the barriers between groups of neighbors early on. He wrote a five-act play about the curse of Babel, and grew determined to overcome the barriers he witnessed every day. He toyed with many utopian ideas, but the language problem held his interest and his hopes for a solution. He acquired more talent than inspiration from his father, a Hebrew scholar and teacher of languages who was strictly practical, an atheist and rather harsh. His mother, a believer, nurtured his idealism.

The family moved to Warsaw in 1873 when Zamenhof was fourteen. He entered the *Gymnasium* for classical studies where he was first in his class throughout the five-year course. He studied Latin and Greek fervently, with passing

intent to revive one of them for modern use. Their difficulties convinced him that the modern international language must be learnable and useful for ordinary people, not just diplomats and scholars. Any national tongue would be unsuitable; he sought a neutral language that all people could agree on as a second tongue. He started by applying arithmetic to anagrams and came up with a perfectly logical system of syllables that was impossible to memorize.

Zamenhof had learned French when, in the fifth grade, he took up English. Although plagued by the irregular orthography and sound of English, he liked its richness and relatively simple grammar. Then one day, walking along a busy street, he noticed that the signs for the shops had a certain regularity in Russian: different words were formed by applying various prefixes to the same root. This builds a large vocabulary from a small reservoir, with much less to memorize. The similarity of many words throughout European languages taught Zamenhof to base his vocabulary on the most common shared roots. He worked out a system of prefixes,

suffixes and grammatical endings to make a user-friendly language. He eliminated gender, extra declensions and conjugations, and irregularities of form and pronunciation. Such difficulties have uses in that we can identify people who learn our language after childhood, i.e., outsiders. But that is not a desirable feature of a language for transcending barriers.

Zamenhof was nineteen when he celebrated the birth of his “universal language” with a group of friends. Translated and original prose and poems in the new tongue filled the young enthusiasts with admiration for its author and his cause: to help all peoples to become part of a great family circle. With graduation the group dispersed; their elders’ cynicism proved too much for all except Zamenhof. Left alone with his creation, he promised his father, a skeptic, that he would let the project go while he studied medicine. In 1879 he moved to Moscow and entered the university medical school. The study of human anatomy and physiology, with classmates of varied origins, added to his feeling of the



1891: Dr. Ludovic Zamenhof, three years after publication of *Lingvo Internacia*

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E. JAMES LIEBERMAN is a psychiatrist and a Contributing Editor of *SHALOM*. This essay is an update of “L. L. Zamenhof: Dr. Esperanto,” from *The New England Journal of Medicine* (261: 963-965, November 5, 1959). Dr. Lieberman is a delegate in medicine to the UEA, a former president of Esperanto-USA (1972-1975), and has participated in UEA World Congresses in France, the United States, Iceland, and China.

oneness of humanity. He was musical and played the piano, which provided some pleasant socializing. But he told no one of his language project, and later wrote that he was socially withdrawn during what should have been a happier time of life. The language continued to develop and mature; he used it to translate, create and think his own thoughts while revising it and becoming fluent himself.

Zamenhof returned to Warsaw in 1881 for financial reasons and finished his medical studies there in 1885. He started out in general practice, in a village, but was sensitive to the torment of sick and dying patients and their families. After four months, he decided on a more tranquil specialty. He trained in ophthalmology in Vienna and, in 1886, opened an office for diseases of the eye in Warsaw.

He was twenty-seven and just betrothed to Clara, a young woman who shared his hopes, when in 1887 *Lingvo Internacia* was first published, with a subsidy from her father. Author Zamenhof said, "I knew what kind of fate attends a physician who is dependent upon the public if that public comes to regard him as a visionary, or as a man who busies himself with side issues." The first booklet, in Russian, explained the purpose of the language, with a concise grammar and a vocabulary. Polish, German, French and English editions followed. Zamenhof relinquished all rights to the language, declaring it the common property of the world. Those interested but skeptical were invited to sign a pledge saying they would learn the language when ten million others had signed the pledge. Soon, and forever after, letters deluged him from far and wide — though not in the millions.

For the next few years he struggled to meet expenses; Clara and their three children shared his modest income. Esperanto took hold, thrived and used up funds for its growth. He moved his practice to Cherson, then to Grodno and finally, in 1898, back to Warsaw, where he became well-established in one of the poor districts.

The initial response to Esperanto was solid. Enthusiasts organized groups. A monthly journal, *La Esperantisto*, appeared in Nuremberg in 1889, with Zamenhof as editor. Most of the subscribers lived in Russia, and were cut off by the censor in 1895 because of a provocative article by Tolstoy. That publication died, but another was born in Sweden. From then on, the Esperanto



**1910: Ludoviko Lazaro Zamenhof ĉe sia tablo, Varsovio, Polujo. (Ludovic Lazarus Zamenhof at his desk, Warsaw, Poland.)**

movement never stopped. International correspondence in Esperanto and the published literature — translated and original — grew rapidly. This was especially important for lesser known languages, where classic writers are underappreciated. With Esperanto the translator is usually a native speaker of the original text rather than of the target language.

The first real test of international oral communication came in Boulogne, France, in May 1905, with six hundred and eighty-eight participants from thirty countries. Zamenhof, unaccustomed to the public stage, addressed the gathering as "brothers and sisters of the great worldwide human family," and expressed his modest enthusiasm at the success of the Congress. Fluency of speech among people of widely diverse origins

proved the language's soundness to its devotees and to many skeptical observers as well. Zamenhof was received by the mayor in Paris and met with eminent scientists and academicians of France. Mathematician Carlot Bourlet hailed him as "the Copernicus of philology."

Success did not distract the doctor from his childhood idea of an undivided world. The spirit of Esperanto, he said, was the *interna ideo* (internal idea) of man's basic brotherhood. In 1906, in Geneva for the second Esperanto Congress he spoke to an audience of twelve hundred, deploring the walls that separate peoples even of the same country, citing a recent pogrom in Bialystok. He did not blame Russians, Poles or Germans, but attributed such brutal tragedies to a few cruel elements thriving in an atmosphere of misunderstanding, perpetuated by selfish government. For him, criticism of policies was justified, but not hatred of peoples. The third congress, held in 1907, brought fifteen hundred Esperantists to Cambridge, England.

In successive years Zamenhof spoke in Dresden, Barcelona, Washington, D.C., Antwerp and Krakow. He stepped down as leader of the movement in 1912 to devote himself to Hillellism, an approach to interpersonal and intergroup relations that supplanted his earlier interest in Zionism. He decided that nationalism was part of the problem in efforts to create a peaceful world. Esperanto was never to replace or even compete with ethnic tongues. It would help keep them alive by providing an alternative to the imposition of another national language. Politically neutral, it would make an ethi-



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cal bridge between diverse peoples and cultures. Though it had a European vocabulary, its regularity made it easy for non-Europeans to learn. Its agglutinative structure echoes Turkish, its numbering system Chinese — though Zamenhof didn't know those languages. The common moral foundation he sought would be, like Esperanto, neutral, workable and acceptable to all people, without encroaching upon any culture or religion. He envisioned something like the Golden Rule at the summit of every people's consciousness, a bridge over the valley of the shadow of ignorance and hate.

Esperanto evolved thanks to an academy of scholars, assembled at Zamenhof's suggestion, to decide upon technical changes and additions. The indifference and cynicism of non-Esperantists was easier to bear than some self-destructive factions that inevitably sprang up in the movement. Growth continued. Besides the Universal Association with its congresses, other groups were formed — international Esperanto societies of teachers, Boy Scouts, workers, scientists, stamp collectors, doctors, Catholics, etc. — along with specialty journals and meetings. Blind people were blessed with Braille books in Esperanto.

In August 1914, Zamenhof set off for the largest congress ever — three thousand Esperanto speakers were to meet in Paris. He was turned back at the Polish-German border. War darkened Europe, Esperanto voices were muted. Zamenhof continued his ophthalmology practice for two more years, then turned it over to his son, Adam. Cut off from outside correspondence, disheartened by the raging inhumanity of war, he diligently completed his translation of the Bible from Hebrew. Addicted to cigarettes, he suffered from angina, and

he had to cut back his working hours. On April 14, 1917, at age fifty-seven, he died.

Hitler and Stalin both deemed Esperanto a threat, and persecuted its advocates as an ill-defined Zionist conspiracy and/or a prohibited link to the world outside. Zamenhof's children, Adam, Zofia and Lidja, were imprisoned and executed by the Nazis.

Zamenhof's home language was Russian. He was fluent in Polish, German and Yiddish, but he belittled his skill in eight other languages that he used. He felt his Jewish background deeply; out of the ghetto came his hope and belief that humanity could overcome traditional estrangement and communicate peacefully. He received a medal of the French Legion of Honor and the highest Order of the King of Spain. Commemorative postage stamps for Zamenhof and/or Esperanto have been issued by twenty-four countries, including Israel.

An ironic testament of the utility of Esperanto came from the US Army in 1962, in *The Aggressor Language*, a field manual that "provides United States forces, portraying AGGRESSOR, with a different language, the use of which will enhance intelligence play and add realism to field exercises.... Esperanto is *not* an artificial or dead language. It is a living and current media [sic] of international oral and written communication."

Today there are dozens of periodicals, many Web sites, even an Esperanto Wikipedia. Sites for learning and connecting include lernu.net and edukado.net. The Universala Esperanto Asocio yearbook lists delegates from one hundred countries. The UEA will hold its ninety-eighth annual congress in Reykjavik, Iceland, in July 2013. ☆

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