

SHALOM

Jewish Peace Letter

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MURRAY POLNER

Russia, the US and Ukraine: **Proceed With Caution**



Seventeenth-century Ukrainian nationalist Bohdan Khmelnytsky and twenty-first century Russian nationalist Vladimir Putin.

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Stefan Merken

‘We Refuse to Serve in the Occupational Army’

WE RECENTLY RECEIVED AN EMAIL FROM RUTH Hiller, of Israel’s New Profiles organization, informing us of an Israeli group called Shministim. It is comprised of more than fifty high school seniors who are expected upon graduation to serve in the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). The seniors wrote to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, telling him of their refusal to serve in what they believe to be an army occupying Palestinian lands. For their refusal to serve in the military, these principled young Israelis risk imprisonment. Even so, their letter is a singular act of courage and civil resistance. The dissenting high school seniors protested the ongoing military occupation where, as their letter pointed out, “human rights are violated.” Their recent group refusal to police the Occupied Territories is the largest in the history of Israel.

Their letter was written as the Israeli government is trying to broaden the IDF draft to include all groups within Israeli society, including ultra-Orthodox males normally exempted for religious studies. It is a move that is meeting with intense opposition. Still, the pressure to serve in the military is far greater for other young people, such as the Shministim. One of the signers, Mandy Cartner, a sixteen-year-old from Tel Aviv, said: “The actions of the army distance us from finding a solution and from creating peace, justice and security. My refusal is a way of expressing my opposition to the wrongs done daily in our name and through us.”

The letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu closed:

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



Dafna Rothstein Landman, seventeen years old, and one of the Shministim who signed a letter to Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, refusing to serve in Israel’s military.

“We the undersigned, intend to refuse to serve in the army and the main reason for this refusal is our opposition to the military occupation of Palestinian territories. Palestinians in the occupied territories live under Israeli rule though they did not choose to do so, and have no legal recourse to influence this regime or its decision-making processes.”

I hope young Israelis like the Shministim can begin to change the landscape of the Israeli social and political makeup. The JPF proudly supports these young people. ☆

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Murray Polner

Proceed With Caution *Russia, the US and Ukraine*

RECENT EVENTS AND KEY ACTORS, PAST AND PRESENT, have apparently upset many of Ukraine's eighty thousand or three hundred thousand Ukrainian Jews. (Surprisingly, no one really knows even an approximate number, because so many have left for the US or Israel.) They voted for the ousted, democratically-elected Viktor Yanukovich as the best of a poor lot in the last election and are now haunted by memories of repeated persecutions and faced with an unpredictable future. The changes demanded by the street protesters, among them the universal hatred for the country's pervasive corruption, may eventually prove beneficial.

But the uncertainty and the presence of extremist groups among them have also aroused new fears, most prominently exhibited in the Jewish press outside Ukraine. "Ukraine Jews Hunker Down Amid Turmoil" read a headline in the liberal Jewish weekly *Forward*. Sounding more urgent was the center-right *Times of Israel*. In an article titled "Israel urged to send forces to guard Ukrainian Jews," Rabbi Menahem Margolin, who heads the European Jewish Association, described "a growing wave of anti-Semitic attacks" during the recent upheavals, and asked for the dispatch of Israeli "trained security guards to protect communities in Ukrainian cities and towns." Meanwhile, an Orthodox rabbi quoted in the *Algemeiner*, a new and very pro-Israel online site, advised Jews to leave after an attack on two rabbinical students. The site also reported that in late February a synagogue in Simferopol (in the recently Russian-occupied region of Crimea) was spray-painted with swastikas and "Death to the Jews,"

according to Anatoly Gendin, director of the Association of Jewish Organizations and Communities of Crimea.

Not everyone agrees that the immediate situation is perilous.

Ukraine's chief Reform rabbi, Alexander Dukhovny, said, yes, there were ultras among the Kiev protesters, but most Ukrainians want a tolerant Western/American style of pluralism. And Yaakov Bleich, an American-born Chabad rabbi in Ukraine, questioned quick and negative judgments, concluding that Ukrainian anti-Yanukovich protesters "are not anti-Semites, they're not right-wing, nationalist neofascists or Nazis, the way



A NASA satellite photograph shows the Crimea peninsula (lower left), a part of Ukraine until recently annexed to Russia.

the Russians have been trying to paint them." He added that leaders — unnamed — had assured him they will not allow anti-Semitism.

So are worrywarts making too much of what thus far seems to be isolated outbreaks of anti-Semitism? Is historical memory coloring present judgments? Will the "Jewish issue" become part of the debate over who's doing what to whom?

I'm a faithful reader of *The New York Times* and appreciate the recent coverage of their Kiev correspondents, Andrew Higgins and Andrew Kramer, in the midst of the chaos and bloodshed. I was struck by their far-too-brief reference to some protesters' "dark nationalistic ideologies" from Ukraine's past, some of whom, they reported, seemed to be shouting pro-Nazi slogans. Still, we wonder: Who speaks for whom? What kind of Ukraine do the protesters and their successors want? Does their vision include Jews and other minorities? And if the International Monetary Fund demands severe austerity as the price of a bailout of the bankrupt interim state, and if the economy collapses and ordinary people begin feeling real pain, will Jews be blamed?

MURRAY POLNER *co-edits* SHALOM.

It's always best to proceed with caution. In tense, confusing times, it's called diplomacy.

There's something else the American mass media have so far ignored: an in-depth examination of far-right Svoboda, one of the three main post-Yanukovich parties now in play. Some think the party has modified its past views; but that remains to be seen. Then, too, how influential will it be in the new government? Its leader, Oleh Tyahnybok, has rarely been shy about criticizing Jews.

Then there are fringe Ukrainian ultra-extremists, such as Pravy Sektor (Right Sector), Patriots of Ukraine, Trident, and White Hammer, whose thugs carried clubs, firebombs, chains and other weapons, and now boast, without evidence, of having been at the center of the protests. Still, even if they were outnumbered by what we hope were genuinely pro-democratic Ukrainians, their presence recalls brown shirts in street battles in Weimar Germany.

Seumas Milne, of the liberal British *Guardian*, went much further. The protesters he saw and overheard hardly seemed interested in a future democratic and tolerant Ukraine. Taking issue with major media outlets, he wrote, "You'd never know from most of the reporting that far-right nationalists and fascists have been at the heart of the protests and attacks on government buildings." Ukrainians, he went on, "are deeply divided about European integration and the protests."

Timothy Snyder, who teaches history at Yale and wrote the brilliant book *Bloodlands*, offered quite a different picture of pro-democratic street protesters, outraged enough at official and private greed and cronyism to risk the government's violent counterattacks. In *The New York Review of Books* he says "the protesters represent every group of Ukrainian citizens" including "Christians, Moslems and Jews" and that "Jewish leaders" — unidentified — "have made a point of supporting the movement."

Years ago, walking with my cousin in Odessa, the third largest Ukrainian city and home to a sizable Jewish population, we talked about how our grandparents managed to survive Nazi and Rumanian savagery that had been assisted by local Ukrainian collaborators. Quoting from eyewitness accounts and Rumanian and German documents, Wendy Lower, John K. Roth professor of history at Claremont McKenna College, and author of "Anti-Jewish Violence in Western Ukraine, Summer 1941," described Ukrainian militia

joining with Nazis and Rumanians to murder the eighteen thousand Jews still left in the city. ("The Rumanians were the worst," my cousin's mother-in-law told me.) I asked how most non-Jewish Odessans had treated them before, during and after the war. By way of answering, my cousin took me to a statue of the writer Konstantin Paustovsky, whose magisterial *The Story of a Life* explored the complexity and richness of Ukrainian life and culture, much of it unknown to outsiders, at least until the current revolution or coup d'état — take

your pick — in Kiev. My cousin then explained that some, not all, Ukrainians were helpful. Yet once allowed to leave, tens of thousands of Ukrainian Jews departed for the US and Israel.

My cousin was right: there have been good and bad times. But in today's perplexing, still unraveling and completely unpredictable climate, history plays the major role. Jews have lived in Ukraine since at least the eighth century, when the Khazars, believed by some to have been Jewish converts, arrived from Asia. But many more began coming after the Union of Lublin in 1569, which consolidated the Kingdom of Poland and the Lithuanian Grand Duchy. Since then, Ukraine's history has been stained over and again by violence against Jews.

"They [Jews] appear to have been well aware of their dangerous situation," wrote Heiko Hauman in *A History of East European Jews*. "Many sources

speak of their weapons or of their fortified synagogues. And then came the great catastrophe." He meant Bohdan Khmelnitzky, a heroic figure in Ukrainian history, who led a force of Cossacks and Ukrainian peasants in 1648 in a brutal war against Poles and Jews, "sparing neither women nor children," as an early chronicle reported. Pogrom regularly followed pogrom, encouraged and fostered by both tsarists and Ukrainians, as peasant mobs and Cossacks attacked obscure *shtetlach*, villages fictionalized and popularized in *Fiddler on the Roof* and made real by my mother's experiences.

During World War I, my father was drafted into the tsarist army. After the Bolsheviks seized power, he was shanghaied into a White army, and I've never forgotten his recollections, which he often shared with me, about Jews being assaulted by all sides, especially in Ukraine. Indeed, in the 1918-1920 civil war, some eighty to one hundred thousand Jews were killed, the most until Hitler decided to try for a record.



Ukrainian national hero Stepan Bandera. During World War II, his OUN-B organization declared Jews to be "the vanguard of Moscovite imperialism in Ukraine."

In World War II, many Ukrainians, perhaps because of their justifiable hatred for Stalin and the Communists, whose pitiless policies managed to kill several million of them during a manufactured famine enforced in the early Thirties, turned to the Nazis, who had little use for them save as collaborators against the Soviets and the Jews. Some joined the SS, and some served in the death camps. The *Ukrainische Hilfspolizei*, or Auxiliary Police, worked German-conquered territory in the Ukraine and Byelorussia, and helped murder seven thousand Jews in Lviv in the summer of 1941. Elsewhere, many Ukrainians killed village Jews and stole their property.

Most famously, Stepan Bandera and his OUN-B (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) had an on-and-off relationship with the Nazis. Once jailed by them and then released, he served alongside them. In 1941, in Cracow, at a meeting held with German approval and not far from where the death camps would soon appear, Bandera's OUN-B declared that "the Jews of the USSR constitute the most faithful support of the ruling Bolshevik regime, and the vanguard of Muscovite imperialism in Ukraine."

The OUN-B, wrote Delphine Bechtel, of the University Paris-Sorbonne, willingly collaborated with the Nazi exter-

mination program, as did the Ukrainian Insurrectional Army (UPA), Bataillon Nachtigall, and the Division SS-Galizien, the latter comprised of Ukrainian volunteers. In June 1941, OUN-B leader and Nazi collaborator Roman Shukhevych wore a German uniform while leading Bataillon Nachtigall into Galicia. In 2007 his life and career was memorialized in a Lviv church and honored with an exhibit entitled "Freedom and Ukraine: The Motto of Roman Shukhevych." Nearby, a huge Bandera memorial has just been completed.

Three years later, in 2010, then-Ukrainian president Viktor Yuschenko honored Bandera posthumously with the National Hero of the Ukraine Award. This, too, is part of Ukrainian-Jewish history.

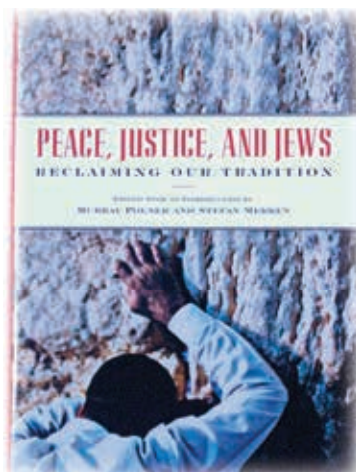
Only time will tell. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Ukraine's interim president, is a Western-style liberal economist and no anti-Semite. Pending the May elections, the two major parties have been given cabinet posts, but Svoboda and the Right Sector are also part of the government and hold some cabinet posts. Meanwhile, despite Russian military threats and some of our neoconservative chicken-hawks, it's always best to proceed with caution. In tense, confusing times, it's called diplomacy. ☆



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Edited by Murray Polner and Naomi Goodman

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

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Publishers Weekly concluded: "There is much to learn here for anyone, Jew or Gentile, interested in global issues of peace and justice."

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Uri Avnery

Their Mothers, Their Fathers

A German film grapples with World War II

IT IS THE SUMMER OF 1941. FIVE YOUNGSTERS — THREE young men and two young women — meet in a bar and spend a happy evening, flirting with each other, getting drunk, dancing forbidden foreign dances. They have grown up together in the same neighborhood of Berlin.

It is a happy time. The war started by Adolf Hitler a year and a half before has progressed incredibly well. In this short time Germany has conquered Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France. The Wehrmacht is invincible. The Führer is a genius, “the greatest military strategist of all times.”

So starts the film that is running now in Israel’s cinemas — a unique historical document. It goes on for five breathless hours, and continues to occupy the thoughts and emotions of its viewers for days and weeks.

Basically it is a film made by Germans for Germans. The German title says it all: *Unsere Mütter, unsere Väter* [Our Mothers, Our Fathers]. The purpose is to answer the questions troubling many of the young Germans of today: Who

were our parents and grandparents? What did they do during the terrible war? What did they feel? What was their part in the horrible crimes committed by the Nazis?

These questions are not asked in the film explicitly. But every German viewer is compelled to ask them. There are no

clear answers. The film does not probe the depths. Rather, it shows a broad panorama of the German people in wartime, the various sections of society, the different types, from the war criminals, through the passive onlookers, to the victims.

The Holocaust is not the center of events, but it is there all the time, not as a separate event but woven into the fabric of reality.

The film starts in 1941, and there-

fore cannot answer the question which, to my mind, is the most important one: How could a civilized nation, perhaps the most cultured in the world, elect a government whose program was blatantly criminal?

True, Hitler was never elected by an absolute majority in free elections. But he came very close to it. And he easily found political partners who were ready to help him form a government.

Some said at the time that it was a uniquely German phenomenon, the expression of the particular German mentality, formed during centuries of history. That theory has been dis-



‘Five youngsters meet in a bar...’ The characters and cast of Our Mothers, Our Fathers: Greta (Katharina Schttler), Wilhelm (Volker Bruch), Charlotte (Miriam Stein), Friedhelm (Tom Schilling), and Viktor (Ludwig Trepte).

Journalist and writer URI AVNERY *is a three-time member of Israel’s Knesset, former editor of Haolam Hazeh news magazine, and a longtime Israeli peace activist.*

credited by now. But if so, can it happen in any other country? Can it happen in our own country of Israel? Can it happen today? What are the circumstances that make it possible?

The film does not answer these questions. It leaves the answers to the viewer.

The young heroes of the film do not ask. They were ten years old when the Nazis came to power, and for them the “Thousand-Year Reich” (as the Nazis called it) was the only reality they knew. It was the natural state of things. That’s where the plot starts.

TWO OF THE YOUNGSTERS are soldiers. One has already seen war and is wearing a medal for valor. His brother has just been called up. The third young man is a Jew. Like the two girls, the young men are full of youthful exuberance. Everything is looking fine.

The war? Well, it can’t last much longer, can it? The Führer himself has promised that by Christmas the Final Victory will be won. The five young people promise each other to meet again at Christmas. No one has the slightest premonition of the terrible experiences in store for each of them.

While viewing the scene, I could not help thinking about my former class. A few weeks after the Nazis’ assumption of power, I became a pupil in the first class of high school in Hanover. My schoolmates were the same age as the heroes of the film. They would have been called up in 1941, and because it was an elite school, all of them would probably have become officers.

Half way through the first year in high school, my family took me to Palestine. I never met any of my schoolmates again, except one (Rudolf Augstein, the founder of the magazine *Der Spiegel*, whom I met years after the war and who became my friend again.) What happened to the others? How many survived the war? How many were maimed? How many had become war criminals?

In the summer of 1941 they were probably as happy as the youngsters in the film, hoping to be home by Christmas.

THE TWO BROTHERS are sent to the Russian front, an unimaginable hell. The film succeeds in showing the realities of war, easily recognizable by anyone who has been a soldier in combat. Only this combat was a hundredfold worse, and the film shows it brilliantly.

The older brother, a lieutenant, tries to shield the younger one. The bloodbath that goes on for four more years, day after day, hour after hour, changes their character. They become brutalized. Death is all around them, they see horrible war crimes, they are commanded to shoot prisoners, they see Jewish children butchered. In the beginning they still dare

to protest feebly, then they keep their doubts to themselves, then they take part in the crimes as a matter of course.

One of the young women volunteers for a frontline military hospital, witnesses the awful agonies of the wounded, denounces a Jewish fellow nurse and immediately feels remorse, and in the end is raped by Soviet soldiers near Berlin, as were almost all German women in the areas conquered by the revenge-thirsty Soviet army.

Israeli viewers might be more interested in the fate of the Jewish boy, who took part in the happy feast at the beginning. His father is a proud German, who cannot imagine Germans doing the bad things threatened by Hitler. He does not dream of leaving his beloved fatherland. But he warns his son about having sexual relations with his Aryan girlfriend. “It’s against the law!”

When the son tries to flee abroad, “aided” by a treacherous Gestapo officer, he is caught, sent to the death camps, succeeds in escaping on the way, joins the Polish partisans (who hate the Jews more than the Nazis), and in the end survives.

Perhaps the most tragic figure is the second girl, a frivolous, carefree singer who sleeps with a senior SS officer

to further her career, is sent with her troupe to entertain the troops at the front, sees what is really happening, speaks out about the war, is sent to prison and executed in the last hours of the war.

BUT THE FATE of the heroes is only the skeleton of the film. More important are the little moments, the daily life, the portrayal of the various characters of German society.

For example, when a friend visits the apartment where the Jewish family had been living, the blond Aryan woman who was allotted the place complains about the state of the apartment from which the Jews had been fetched and sent to their death: “They didn’t even clean up before they left! That’s how the Jews are, dirty people!”

Everyone lives in constant fear of being denounced. It is a pervading terror, which nobody can escape. Even at the front, with death staring them in the face, a hint of doubt about the Final Victory uttered by a soldier is immediately silenced by his comrades. “Are you crazy?”

Even worse is the deadening atmosphere of universal agreement. From the highest officer to the lowliest maid, everybody endlessly repeats the propaganda slogans of the regime. Not out of fear, but because they believe every word of the all-pervading propaganda machine. They hear nothing else.

It is immensely important to understand this. In the totalitarian state, fascist or communist or whatever, only the very few free spirits can withstand the endlessly repeated

A citizen under a criminal totalitarian regime becomes a child. Propaganda becomes for him reality, the only reality he knows. It is more effective than even the terror.

slogans of the government. Everything else sounds unreal, abnormal, crazy. When the Soviet army was already fighting its way through Poland and nearing Berlin, people were unwavering in their belief in the Final Victory. After all, the Führer says so, and the Führer is never wrong. The very idea is preposterous.

It is this element of the situation that is difficult for many people to grasp. A citizen under a criminal totalitarian regime becomes a child. Propaganda becomes reality, the only reality one knows. It is more effective than even the terror.

THIS IS THE ANSWER to the question we cannot abstain from asking again and again: How was the Holocaust possible? It was planned by a few, but it was implemented by hundreds of thousands of Germans, from the engine driver of the train to the officials who shuffled the papers. How could they do it?

They could, because it was the natural thing to do. After all, the Jews were out to destroy Germany. The communist hordes were threatening the life of every true Aryan. Germany needed more living space. The Führer said so.

That's why the film is so important, not only for Germans, but for every people, including our own.

People who carelessly play with ultranationalist, fascist, racist or other antidemocratic ideas don't realize that they are playing with fire. They cannot even imagine what

it means to live in a country that tramples on human rights, that despises democracy, that oppresses another people, that demonizes minorities. The film shows what it is like: hell.

THE FILM DOES NOT HIDE that Jews were the main victims of the Nazi Reich, and nothing comes near their sufferings. But the second victim was the German people, victims of themselves.

Many people insist that after this trauma, Jews cannot behave like a normal people, and that therefore Israel cannot be judged by the standards of normal states. They are traumatized.

This is true for the German people, too. The very need to produce this unusual film proves that the Nazi specter still haunts the Germans, that they are still traumatized by their past.

When Angela Merkel met recently with Benjamin Netanyahu, the whole world laughed at the photo in which the shadow of our prime minister's finger inadvertently painted a moustache on the *Kanzlerin's* face.

But the relationship between our two traumatized peoples is far from a joke. ✧

— *Our Mothers, Our Fathers will be released with English subtitles on Blu-Ray disk next month under the title Generation War.*

QUOTE / UNQUOTE

Just to be is a blessing

Just to live is holy.

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

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Charles Manekin

Shulamit Aloni

The passing of one of Israel's last remaining Jews

I WOKE UP TO THE NEWS THAT SHULAMIT ALONI HAD passed away.

Aloni was of a generation that was brought up with the notion that to be a Jew was to be a moral human being. Judaism was encapsulated for her in the ethical humanism of the prophets, in the social justice of the Hebrews. She truly felt that the Bible preached this justice not only to Jews but to all people. "Man is beloved for he is born in the image of God," and that image is one of justice and mercy. She was a Zionist, to be sure, and she loved the Jewish people. But because she loved them, she chastised and castigated them when they failed to live up to their own standards. She realized, of course, that much of biblical morality was unacceptable, but she felt, as do I, that there were fundamentals of biblical morality that can and should be extended beyond what the Bible intended. She occasionally called upon the rabbinic interpretation, but she was of a generation that lived and breathed the Bible, whole sections of which she knew by heart. She was able to pass that on to her own children, but her generation was not as fortunate.

Aloni lived long enough to see the creation of the amoral

CHARLES MANEKIN *is professor of philosophy at the University of Maryland. This essay originally appeared in The Magnes Zionist (www.jeremiahhaber.com).*

Jew as an ideal: the proud Jewish nationalist who saw morality as a luxury that a besieged people like the Jews could little afford. She cried out repeatedly against this trend. Like many of her generation, she saw the rise of religious funda-

mentalism and ultranationalism as a threat to what had been the redeeming features of a society that she felt had much to repent for. She did not go into politics to make money and taste the high life, as so many of Israel's recent leaders have done. No suggestion of corruption was ever associated with her.

Where is the Judaism of my youth? Not an hour, not a day, not a minute goes by without the cold-hearted trampling of human rights in Israel. Land is stolen, refugees are rounded up and thrown into prison, and all in the name of what? Jewish survival?

Hello, are there any Jews left?

Well, yes, there is the surviving remnant, and the list is not short. They are the human rights activists harassed on the West Bank, the citizenship teachers hauled up before committees after right-wing students complain that they are being political, the

defenders of African refugees' rights, and the educators of Jewish values. Real Jewish values. The children of Aloni.

We are left orphaned by the passing of a hero of Israel. May the memory of this *tzadeket*/righteous person be for a blessing. ☆



Shulamit Aloni, Summer 2002.

Maurice S. Friedman

Martin Buber on Peace

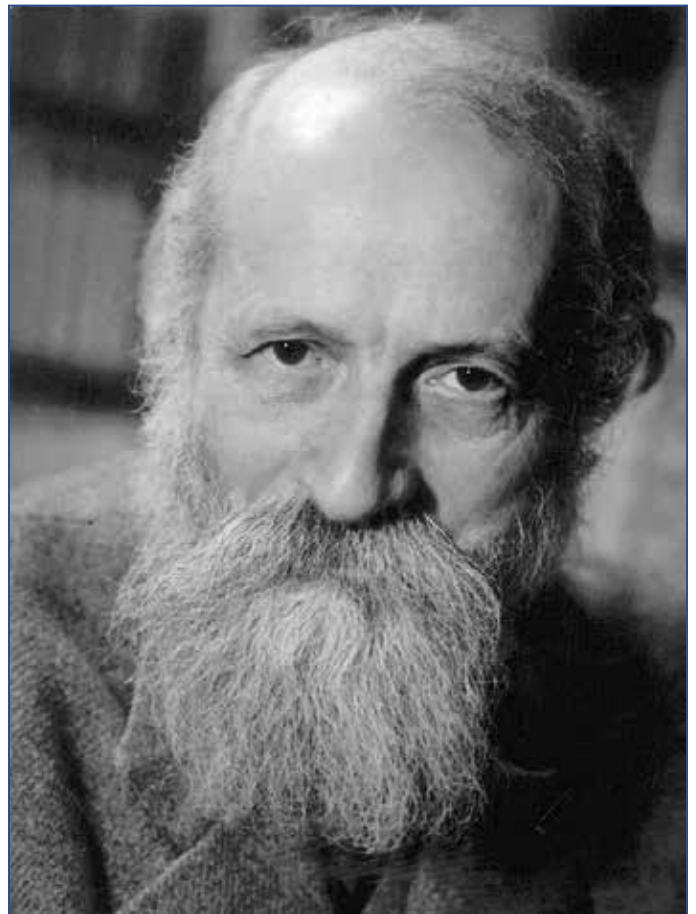
MARTIN BUBER WAS IN THE FOREMOST RANKS of contemporary philosophers, religious thinkers, and scholars of the history of religion. He is known as a leader of Zionist thought, translator and interpreter of the Bible, interpreter of Hasidism, professor of religion in Germany and later of social philosophy at Jerusalem’s Hebrew University, organizer of adult education, and author of many books including *I and Thou*, *The Way of Man*, and *Tales of the Hasidim*. When I asked Martin Buber to speak to the Jewish Peace Fellowship in 1962, he said, “I will do it, but you must explain to them that I am not a pacifist.”

“One must choose between ‘ism’ and ‘situation,’” says Buber. By “ism” he meant actions according to a set of abstract, universal principles, whether pacifist or any other; by “situation,” he meant the spontaneous actions of the whole being in response to the unique demand of each particular hour. Yet there is great relevance for pacifists in Buber’s philosophy, with its insistence on treating the other as a “Thou” and not an “It,” on experiencing a situation from the side of the other person as well as one’s own, and on the use of good means to one’s ends.

“What knowledge could be of greater importance to the men of our age, and to the various communities of our time,” wrote Buber in 1947, than that “the use of unrighteousness as a means to a righteous end makes the end itself unrighteous?” The person or community which seeks to use evil for the sake of good destroys its own soul in the process.

The peacemaker “is God’s fellow worker,” but we make peace not by conciliatory words and humane projects but through making peace “wherever we are destined and summoned to do so: in the active life of our own community and in ... its relationship to another community.” One of the cen-

MAURICE FRIEDMAN (1921-1990) was a longtime member of the Jewish Peace Fellowship. He wrote *Martin Buber: The Life of Dialogue* and then the definitive three-volume biography of Buber. During World War II he was a Conscientious Objector who volunteered for the Forest Service, serving as a “smoke jumper” who parachuted from planes to fight forest fires.



Martin Buber (1878-1965).

tral emphases of Buber’s Zionism, correspondingly, was his insistence that the Jews in Palestine live *with* Arabs and not just *next* to them. For many years one of the leaders of *Ihud* (Unity) and of the League for Jewish-Arab Rapprochement and Cooperation, Buber wrote, in 1939, in an open letter to Mahatma Gandhi:

I belong to a group of people who from the time Britain conquered Palestine have not ceased to strive for a conclusion of a genuine peace between

Jew and Arab. By a genuine peace we . . . infer that both peoples together should develop the land without the one imposing its will on the other.

Although in the final analysis the only thing that can help is what is true and right, in an emergency this is not always possible. But the humanity of our existence begins where we say: We shall do no more injustice than we must to live. Only then do we become responsible to this life, and this responsibility cannot be laid down according to any set principle but must be ever again recognized in the depths of the soul according to the demands of each concrete situation.

“The human world,” Buber wrote in 1952, “is today, as never before, split into two camps, each of which understands the other as the embodiment of falsehood and itself as the embodiment of truth.” Faith in the possibility of genuine conversation between individuals and peoples is perhaps the one antidote to the fears which makes us see a country

with an ideology different from our own as the alien culture which has to be destroyed in order that we can live in a truly “human” world, that is, a world dominated solely by our own worldview. Yet the resumption of true dialogue between peoples will only be possible when the mistrust which divides the world into hostile camps is overcome.

The powerlessness of politics must be recognized today before it is too late, and it must be recognized by men who will come together out of the camps and will talk with one another, despite their criticism of the opposing system and their loyalty to their own. Men such as these will be able to distinguish between the true and exaggerated needs of their own and other people. There is one front of such men, writes Buber, the representatives of a true humanity who fight together even without knowing it, each in his own place. Only through genuine dialogue between them “can the opposition, certainly not be removed from the world, but be humanly arbitrated and led toward its overcoming.” ✧

Richard H. Schwartz

Vegetarianism for a More Peaceful World

THE UNIVERSAL DREAM OF A PEACEFUL, NONVIOLENT world will never be realized as long as we continue to consume the flesh of animals.

Simply put, the senseless, mind-boggling, global slaughter of over sixty billion chickens, cows, turkeys, pigs and other farm animals, and an even greater number of fish and other sea creatures, constitutes the largest source of bloodshed and killing on our planet.

It is a bloodbath of inconceivable magnitude.

Through the consumption of flesh, we desensitize ourselves to suffering and violence. But through the adoption of plant-based diets, we nurture our bodies and souls and embrace compassion.

Most people seldom if ever give the violence in animal agriculture a thought. But throughout history, some distinguished individuals saw connections between animal-based diets and the potential for violence and war.

U. Nu, former prime minister of Burma, said: “World peace, or any other kind of peace, depends greatly on the attitude of the

mind. Vegetarianism can bring about the right mental attitude for peace. In this world of lusts and hatred, greed and anger, force and violence, vegetarianism holds forth a way of life which, if practiced universally, can lead to a better, more just, and more peaceful community of nations.”

George Bernard Shaw, the greatest Irish playwright, poetically wrote, “We’re sick of war; we do not want to fight. The thought of it now fills our heart with dread. And yet we gorge ourselves upon the dead. Like carrion crows, we live and feed on meat, regardless of the suffering and pain we cause by doing so. If thus we treat defenseless animals, for sport or gain, how can we hope in this world to attain the *peace* we say we are so anxious for? We pray for it, o’er hecatombs of slain, to God, while outraging the moral law. Thus cruelty begets its offspring — War.”

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, the great nineteenth-century German rabbi, stressed that vegetables are the preferable food to help make the human body an instrument of the soul and to implement its aims of holiness and moral freedom. He indicated that every food that makes the body too active in a carnal direction makes people more indifferent and less sensitive to the loftier impulses of the moral life.

He also stated, “The boy who, in crude joy, finds delight in the convulsions of an injured beetle or the anxiety of a

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suffering animal will soon also be dumb toward human pain.”

Albert Einstein agreed. “The vegetarian manner of living, by its purely physical effect on the human temperament, would most beneficially influence the lot of mankind.”

There is another important connection between vegetarianism and efforts to establish a more peaceful world.

The ancient Jewish sages noted that the Hebrew words for bread (*lechem*) and war (*milchamah*) come from the same root. From this connection they deduced that when there is a shortage of grain, water, and other necessities, people are more likely to go to war.

Battles over scarce resources have occurred throughout human history, from disputes over well water in the early chapters of Genesis to conflicts over oil more recently.

Since animal-based diets require far more land, grain, water, fuel, and other resources per person than plant-based (vegan) diets, this makes violence and war more likely. For example, it takes up to fourteen times as much water for a person on an animal-based diet than one on a vegan diet. Also, while nearly a billion people worldwide are chronically hungry, seventy percent of the grain produced in the US is fed to animals destined for slaughter. With many experts projecting major scarcities of food, water, and energy soon, this does not bode well for a peaceful future.

The following dialogue from Plato’s *Republic* dramatizes the relationship between the consumption of meat and war:

...and there will be animals of many other kinds, if people eat them?

Certainly.

And living in this way we shall have much greater need of physicians than before?

Much greater.

And the country which was enough to support the original inhabitants will be too small now, and



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not enough?

Quite true.

Then a slice of our neighbors’ land will be wanted by us for pasture and tillage, and they will want a slice of ours, if, like ourselves, they exceed the limit of necessity, and give themselves up to the unlimited accumulation of wealth?

That, Socrates, will be inevitable.

And so, we shall go to war, Glaucon. Shall we not?

Most certainly.

In view of the enormous waste of grain and other resources related to livestock agriculture, the following statement by former Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon is relevant: “Hunger and famine will do more to destabilize this world; [they are] more explosive than all atomic weaponry possessed by the big powers. Desperate people do desperate things.”

This is why I have jokingly argued that the slogans of the vegetarian movement and the peace movement should be the same: “All we are saying is give *peas* a chance.”

There are many causes for war and violence, and I admit it would be simplistic to suggest that a shift toward vegetarianism, by itself, would eliminate all conflicts. However, by adopting a diet that reduces the current massive mistreatment of animals and shows concern and loving kindness for the hungry people of the world through more equitable sharing of God’s abundant harvests, we can play a significant role in helping to move the world toward a more harmonious, peaceful world, when “nations shall not learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:4) ☆

— *Richard Schwartz will be honored in Manhattan on Monday night, May 19, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday. The event will benefit Jewish Vegetarians of North America (JVNA). For additional information, visit www.JewishVeg.com/Schwartz-at-80 before April 20.*

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