

## After The Cold War — What?

By Arthur Waskow

On the 51st anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Germans smashed the Berlin Wall. For Jews, a tumult of emotions — yes, the upsurge of the human spirit, yes, a step toward freedom, yes, a step toward peace, yes, a "redemptive" kind of smashing ... and yes, a shiver, a shudder. Ironies.

Even more than irony, a new world. **Forty years of Cold War are over.** For most of us, our whole way of thinking about the world, even what we were **against** — gone.

And now — can we make a **new kind of shalom?**

Because the most dangerous war we face now is really the "war" between the human race and our deeply wounded planet. Now the question for us — including groups like The Shalom Center — is: Can we make **shalom** in its deeper sense — not just peace treaties, but a deeper wholeness? A global peace?

Nuclear weapons were the first reality to spark in us this question — as we absorbed that every H-bomb is an instant portable Auschwitz, that enough of them at once could bring "nuclear winter" on the earth.

And now we also know that without even exploding these machines of death, each factory that has been making them has been spilling plutonium — the ultimate poison, deadly for 200,000 years — into our earth and water.

These and other US military installations have simply been ignoring anti-pollution laws. Bringing them into compliance and healing the damage they have already done will cost \$150 billion. Should we wait for **thirty years** to do that — which is what the military wants? How many more of our friends will die needlessly of cancer — if we wait that long?

Meanwhile, we also know that global warming can shatter human civilization.

And that destroying the tropical rain forests will deplete our planet's oxygen and destroy thousands of sacred species.

And that acid rain is killing millions of trees.

And that oil spills can poison the oceans that are the well-springs of all life.

Retooling our society to prevent all these will cost hundreds of billions. Where else can it come from, except from our swollen Cold War military budgets?

The Cold War is over — **almost everywhere.**

It is over in the Soviet military, in Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia.

It is mostly over for Soviet Jews — who are now going in thousands to hear Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach sing his stirring songs in public. Now it is not Soviet repression but the U.S. government's fear of the cost of resettling them that is preventing the emigration of Soviet Jews.

**Yet the cost of resettling refugees could be absorbed in a minute if we proclaimed the Cold War over and cut some useless weapons out of the Federal budget.**

In fact, the refugee problem — among Jews and others — is the second great international problem that crosses all national boundaries.

Just like acid in the clouds and plutonium in the water, the pain and anger of refugees can poison the globe — unless we all work together to deal with those needs and those dangers.

The money to do all this **could** come from cutting Cold War military budgets. **But the Cold War is not yet over in the U.S. military budget.**

Yes, the Pentagon has been told to draft a 5% budget cut. But even this "cut" masks a built-in rise in the military budget. **What would really make sense is a much deeper cut in the U.S. military budget — and the transfer of that money to housing the homeless, helping refugees, healing the deeply wounded earth.**

We are going to have to push to get these changes made.

Why? Because the last thing powerful institutions like to do is to diminish their own power. And size. And money. Unless somebody is pushing them — hard. We're seeing how true that is in Eastern Europe, right now.

The American Jewish community has clout in

American politics. If we begin to say, loud and clear, "The Cold War is over. What we need is **Mother Earth's Household Budget**, not a Cold War military budget," — we will be heard.

But — **being Jewish is about more than having political clout.** It is about **how** we use our political clout, and **for what.**

The Cold War is over. But **what kind of new world** will we make for the 21st century? That is a basic Jewish question.

Maybe it is the real reason that many of us shivered when the Berlin Wall came down. Sure, we were remembering Kristallnacht and Hitler. But in our heads we know that Germany can't hurt Jews again. In our **kishkes**, the question is, what will the new Germany, the new Eastern Europe, the new Soviet Union, the **new United States**, look like?

Some people are saying that what comes after the Cold War is a business war, a commercial war, with Japan. What do we really need? Bigger and sharper TV sets. What was really wrong with East Germany? Its rattletrap automobiles.

But if we come to this question from a deep Jewish place, we can see that — After all the suffering of the 20th century, after all the disgusting inhumanity that has overshadowed all our lives, we must make something different happen. Something as deep and amazing as what is happening in Eastern Europe.

The **whole Earth** is in danger, the **whole human race** is in danger. We must act together — the whole Earth, the whole human race. What else can it mean, in our generation, to keep saying the Sh'ma? — Hear O Israel, our God is **one.**

No, the world will not turn into the Garden of Eden or the Song of Songs. But we can set as a goal, an intention, that our main concern is not market wars — but learning how to work together for life. For the lives of refugees. For the lives of trees. For the lives of the homeless. For the lives of those who live close to plutonium-poisoned water.

None of the dangers we have talked about can be dealt with inside the boundaries of a single

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