

type1cm

Uri Avnery

politics

Uri Avnery March 18, 2017 The Most Moral Army

A FEW DAYS ago I happened upon an excellent British movie, "Testament of Youth", based on the memoirs of Vera Brittain.

Vera tells her story, the story of a British girl who grew up in a bourgeois family without worries or sorrows, when World War I put an end to that paradise. Her brother, her friends and her fiancée were killed one by one in the terrible mudscapes of France. She enlisted as a nurse near the front and dealt with hundreds of wounded and dead. The tender country girl turned into a hardened woman. The scene which impressed me most occurs when she is posted to a hut full of wounded Germans. A German officer, not so young, is dying. In his delirium he sees his beloved, catches the hands of Vera and whispers "Is that you, Clara?" and Vera answers in German "Ich bin hier", I am here. With a happy smile on his lips, the German dies. On the morrow of the war, an English crowd demands a vengeful peace. Vera takes the stage and tells of this experience. The crowd falls silent. THE MOVIE brought me back to the affair of Elor Azaria, the soldier who killed a seriously wounded Arab attacker lying helpless on the ground. He has been sharply condemned by the military court but punished with the ridiculously light prison term of a year and a half. His publicity-grabbing attorney has appealed. Killing a wounded or captured enemy is a war crime. Why? For many people, this is a mystery. War is the realm of killing and destroying. Soldiers are

Azaria. Killing a wounded, neutralized enemy "terrorist" is a war crime, pure and simple. Wounded "terrorists" have to be treated. They are not enemies anymore, they are just injured human beings. Like the dying German in the movie. SARAH NETANYAHU, the widely unpopular wife of our Prime Minister, recently said in an interview: "I believe that the Israeli Army is the most moral army in the world!" She was only quoting an Israeli article of faith, repeated endlessly in all Israeli media, schools and political speeches. Some might think that a "moral army" is an oxymoron. Armies are immoral by their very nature. Armies are there to make war, and war is basically immoral. One might wonder how war has survived all these millennia. Humanity has made enormous progress in all fields of endeavor, yet war has endured. It seems that it is too deeply entrenched in human nature and human society. When two citizens quarrel, they are no longer allowed to kill each other. They have to go to court and accept the verdict, based on a law accepted by all. Common sense would say that the same should apply to nations. When two states have a quarrel, they should go to an international court and accept its judgment peacefully. How far are we from such a reality? Centuries? Millennia? An eternity? In the 17th century, war was conducted by mercenaries, who fought for gain. Regiments sometimes changed sides on the battlefield. Soldiers were out for loot. The "Sack of Magdeburg" during the Thirty Years' War lives in German history to