

COMMENTARY | LEWIS BALE

## The drama of WWI on film

It was supposed to be “the war to end all wars” – but, of course, it didn’t. Yet World War I and its aftermath changed history in any number of ways: Empires were shattered, Communism arrived in Russia, the Nazi Party rose out of the ashes of Germany’s defeat.

And World War I helped jump-start a relatively new art form. “The war happened at the moment when cinema became the centerpiece of pop culture,” says Jay Winter, a Yale University history professor and author of “Over Here: The First World War and American Society.” “The film industry grew when war became a mainstay of film, and war has been a mainstay ever since. The way in which war provided a backdrop for adventure stories gave the film industry an enormous boost.”

In fact, hundreds of movies have been made about the war, including classics like “All Quiet on the Western Front” (1930), “Grand Illusion” (1937) and “Paths of Glory” (1957). And World War I still fascinates filmmakers: Steven Spielberg’s new film, “War Horse,” which opens Christmas Day, is set during the conflict, and in 2005, “Joyeux Noel,” based on the true story of enemy soldiers who fraternized during an unofficial 1914 Christmas truce, was nominated for an Oscar as best foreign language film.

But the conflict also had an effect on literature and theater. “The great war books that are still in print, like ‘All Quiet on the Western Front’ (originally published in 1929), are written by people who engaged in irony to show the expectations of war and the outcome,” says Winter. “The war universalized bereavement and provided a literature for people in mourning. It didn’t matter who won or lost; everyone was a survivor.”

Winter is referring to the fact that nearly everyone expected the war to last a few months, but it dragged on for four years, eventually killing more than 8 million soldiers. Only about 100,000 of those were American (the United States didn’t enter the war until 1917), which means the so-called Great War is a more important touchstone in Europe than it is here.

But that doesn’t mean works about the war don’t resonate in the States. In fact, two recent World War I-set Broadway dramas featuring strong antiwar statements have enjoyed major critical success: “War Horse,” the basis for the Spielberg film, won the 2011 Tony Award for best play; and the 2007 production of the 1928 play “Journey’s End” was awarded a Tony for best revival.

Winter calls the conflict “the first catastrophe of the 20th century,” and the trench warfare, almost unimaginable slaughter, senselessness of the whole enterprise, and that it touched so many millions of families, rank it as a horror of the first order. And it is this horror that makes World War I, and the artistic depictions of it, still relevant.

“We’re still dealing with the consequences of it,” says Winter. It was the “first industrialized war run by states with modern communications and transportation systems. No one was safe, no one was free from war. Not so before 1914.”

■ Lewis Bale writes for Newsday.

### LETTERS POLICY

- Letters should be typed or neatly printed.
- Letters must be signed and include an address and phone number. No letters will be published unless verified with the author in person or by telephone.
- Letters may be edited for space considerations.
- The publication of any letter is at the discretion of the editor.
- All letters become the property of *The Leader* and cannot be returned to sender.

**Mail your letter to:** **Fax your letter to:**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (607) 936-9939

THE LEADER

PO BOX 1017

CORNING, NY 14830

<b>The LEADER</b> The Leader (ISSN #10501983) The Leader is published daily at 34 West Pulteney Street, Corning, New York 14830 by Liberty Group Corning Holdings, Inc. Periodical postage paid at Corning, New York 14830-0817. USPS code   0586-160 Postmaster: Send address changes to The Leader, West Pulteney Street, Corning, New York 14830 Publisher: Dennis Bruen <b>ON THE FRONT PAGE</b> Corning clocktower by artist Larry Barone		<b>CIRCULATION</b> Elmer Kuehner   Circulation director 936-4651, Ext. 320  <b>EDITORIAL</b> Stella DuPree   Managing editor 936-4651, Ext. 361 sdupree@the-leader.com  <b>ADVERTISING</b> Classifieds (607) 936-4651, Ext. 651 Retail (607) 936-4651, Ext. 653 Adv fax (607) 962-0782  Kurt Bartenstein   Ad director, 936-4651, Ext. 388 kbartenstein@the-leader.com	
<b>POSTAL RATES</b>			
<b>STEBUEN COUNTY</b>		<b>ELSEWHERE IN USA</b>	
One month	\$28.60	One month	\$36.85
Three months	\$85.80	Three months	\$110.55
Six months	\$171.60	Six months	\$221.10
One year	\$308.88	One year	\$397.98

ARTIST'S VIEW



POLITICS | SEN. TOM O'MARA

## Year's end

It's hard to believe that the final days of my first year as this region's state Senator are on the doorstep, but here they are. I can't think of a better way to ring out year one than by recalling some of the thoughts I started with back in January, especially this one: the economic and fiscal challenges may be as daunting as they've ever been in New York state, but there has never been a more important time to serve.

When I took the Oath of Office in the Senate Chamber on Jan. 5, 2011 and was sworn in to represent our 53rd Senate District, it offered a real opportunity to get to work on the ground floor of turning this state around. Nearly one year ago, the common thinking was that the ability of a new governor and this year's class of state legislators to take dramatic steps to truly chart a new course for New York would ultimately be the barometer of our success. Would we, finally, begin to right the ship? Would we, finally, take advantage of the opportunity for a fresh start in New York state?

Looking back over the past year, the answer's yes on both counts. We've started to right the ship, especially in economic and fiscal terms, and we're under way with a fresh start. So when I reflect on my first term in

the Senate, I keep recalling that time-honored idea that “out of adversity comes opportunity.”

This same thought's going to hold true for New York state in 2012, and so I'm hopeful that the work ahead of this new Legislature will continue to reform many state government practices and revitalize key state commitments. The 2011 session was a good, solid beginning, but it wasn't perfect. There's important work left to do.

So I'll wrap up this first year in the same way I began it, by saying that I'm enormously honored to represent all of you and I'm looking forward to the opportunities we'll have to keep working together to improve the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes regions. The emphasis there remains on together. Our communities are most effective when we join forces. Which means I'll keep reaching out in the weeks and months ahead to share ideas at a community meeting, through work on a local project, or in pursuit of common goals. A new round of community meetings has already been scheduled for January and February. I'll be doing my best to provide as many of these opportunities as possible, because I believe above all else that a return to the fundamentals of good government is needed

more than ever and it's a list that always begins with open, straightforward give-and-take between elected officials and those they represent.

Priority No. 1 remains to carry on a tradition of accessibility and teamwork in representing the communities of this region. It's been a valuable and effective tradition for our constituents and I'll be working closely with all of our local Assembly representatives, as well as with the local leaders whose efforts are central to the quality of our counties, towns and villages.

My Senate service will stay focused on fundamental principles:

- Accessibility to those you represent.
- Responsibility to the taxpayers.
- Economic and fiscal soundness.

I'll keep doing everything possible to build on this bedrock of government, and I'm grateful for the opportunity.

Throughout the New Year, keep in mind my website (omara.nysenate.gov) and my e-mail address (omara@nysenate.gov). I'll look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, my very best wishes to all of you and your families for an enjoyable, a meaningful, and a safe holiday season.

■ Tom O'Mara is a Republican state senator from Big Flats.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

### Corning Inc. left years ago

**TO THE EDITOR** | Hey Corning, City Fathers, Corning Inc. What built Corning the City and the Corning Glass Works is gone!

The work ethic, the pride, the jobs of those dedicated immigrants who gave their lives to make Corning Glass Works what it was, certainly hasn't been allowed to be passed down to subsequent generations of “real” Corningites.

We have a palace of a “headquarters” but few

jobs in its namesake, Corning. Let's face it, it's real plain, real obvious there is no allegiance of Corning Inc. to the City of Corning and absolutely no reason for Corning the city to be proud of Corning Inc., unless of course you're one of the “uppercrust” and/or a shareholder.

Oh yes, we do have a “headquarters” but not one production facility to be found within the city limits of Corning, N.Y., not one. Concrete slabs where thousands once worked, had pride, produced fine products and built a company in Corning, named Corning.

Vycor, Main Plant with A, B, C factories, Fallbrook, Pressware, Machine Shop, now Steuben – the crystal gem – all gone! Where are you Corning City fathers?

One might say you've been “Shanghaied.” Hey, Corning Inc., how about some “new” factories and jobs here in Corning, or ... leave! Oh wait, you're practically already left but the City of Corning hasn't realized that Corning Inc. and production in Corning: Bah Humbug – corporate foreign America!

Stephen Benyo  
Elmira

COMMENTARY | DOYLE McMANUS

## A long goodbye

This week, the last convoy of U.S. troops in Iraq drove noisily across the border into Kuwait and shut the gate behind them. The next drawdown comes in Afghanistan, where American forces are scheduled to disengage from most combat by the end of 2014.

But the Afghanistan withdrawal won't be anywhere near as final as the one we just saw. U.S. military leaders are working on a new slimmed-down strategy that would keep some American troops in combat against the Taliban for years to come, long after 2014.

The heart of the new strategy is a shift in the U.S. mission from fighting the Taliban directly to serving mainly as advisors and support forces for the new Afghan army. But some Americans would still be in the combat business, not only as frontline advisors, but also as special operation units and a quick reaction force to rescue Afghan fighters who got into trouble.

The strategy is still being debated and designed, and officials said they haven't determined how many Americans would stay behind. “I'm not predicting tens of thousands,” Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, told me and other reporters who accompanied him on a visit to U.S. bases in Afghanistan last week.

When I asked another senior official whether 15,000 was a plausible figure, he nodded and said: “I like that number.”

The force now numbers about 94,000; that hypothetical 15,000 would be a smaller presence than the United States has maintained in Afghanistan since 2005. But it's still likely to come as a surprise to anyone who thought President Obama's promise to draw forces down by 2014 meant a complete end to the U.S. combat role.

“Our troops will continue coming home at a steady pace as Afghan security forces move into the lead,” Obama said in June, when he outlined his withdrawal timetable. “Our mission will change from combat to support. By 2014, this process of transition will be complete, and the Afghan people will be responsible for their own security.”

U.S. officials in Afghanistan have tried to stress the flip side of the message: One way or another, we're staying for a long time.

“We're not going to be done by the end of '14,” the commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, Marine Gen. John Allen, told us last week. “The message that we will be here in some form ... is a very important message for the Taliban.”

If the two messages sound contradictory, that's because they reflect a continuing ambivalence at the heart of U.S. policy. Obama wants to prevent the Taliban from toppling the government in Kabul, so he ordered a surge in U.S. troops to a peak of more than 100,000 last year. But the president also wants to make sure that the surge is only temporary – and that American voters focus on the fact