



**Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud: Four
Activist Intellectuals and their Strategies for Peace,
1945-1989--Louise Weiss (France), Leo Szilard
(USA), E. P. Thompson (England), Danilo Dolci
(Italy)**

Michael Bess

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"Two world wars, concentration camps, the obliteration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and continued preparations for nuclear war illustrate the modern world's propensity for mass destruction. . . . Yet there have been important signs of resistance to this trend. These have included not only the emergence of mass-based peace and disarmament movements but activist intellectuals grappling with the growing problem posed by mass violence among nation-states. . . . Bess examines the lives and ideas of four of these intellectuals: Leo Szilard of Hungary and (later) the United States, E. P. Thompson of England, Danilo Dolci of Italy, and Louise Weiss of France. . . . *Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud* is a powerful, important scholarly work, casting new light upon some of the great issues of modern times. Readers will learn much from it."—Lawrence S. Wittner, *Peace and Change*

"Bess seeks to understand the way in which the creation of the atomic bomb has changed the social and political situation of humankind. Are we to be held hostage by military forces or can we transform our situation? He describes the lives of four very different activists, each with different views on what causes conflict and how best to address conflict. . . . Overall, this book offers an interesting perspective on life after the atomic bomb. . . . In asking ourselves what the possibilities of our future are, we can turn to these lives for some guidance. . . . This book is informative, provocative, and encourages one to consider carefully how s/he chooses to live."—Erin McKenna, *Utopian Studies*

"These four lives, researched and skillfully presented by historian Michael Bess, make fascinating stories in themselves. They also serve as useful vehicles for examining major cross-currents of Cold War resistance. . . . From Weiss the cynical pragmatist to Szilard the high-level fixer to Thompson the social reformer to Dolci the spiritual street organizer, Michael Bess has woven an illuminating tapestry of human efforts to cope with life under the mushroom cloud."—Samuel H. Day Jr., *The Progressive*

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