“What They Understood And Their Leaders Refused To Acknowledge Was That Battles And ‘Victories’ Didn’t Add Up To Anything”
“The Number Of Communist Dead Meant Nothing, Changed Nothing”
“There Is A Point Of View That Says That The United States Got Involved In The Vietnam War Simply Because We Thought It Would Be Easy”
While a colonel in Saigon was declaring that the enemy “no longer maintains in our view capability to mount, execute or sustain a serious offensive action,” out in the countryside soldiers were looking around uneasily, saying, “Charlie’s up to something. Slick, slick, that fucker’s so slick. Watch!”

By Wendy Smith, The American Scholar [Excerpts]

Michael Herr’s brilliant, bitter, and loving book was hailed as a masterpiece when it was published in 1977, and the critical consensus has held steady ever since.

Somehow, a young journalist whose previous experience consisted mostly of travel pieces and film criticism managed to transform himself into a wild new kind of war correspondent capable of comprehending a disturbing new kind of war.

“Herr is the only writer I’ve read who has written in the mad-pop-poetic/bureaucratically camouflaged language in which Vietnam has lived,” wrote playwright and Vietnam draftee David Rabe.
It created enough of a sensation to prompt me to shell out $8.95 for the hardcover, a lot of money for a college undergraduate in 1978. That was less than three years after North Vietnamese troops had marched into Saigon, during the odd political lull between Richard Nixon's resignation and Ronald Reagan's election.

I read Dispatches then through particularly rose-colored glasses, confident that we had learned the lessons of Vietnam and Watergate. In the ensuring 29 years, my awe at Herr's achievement has never lessened, but each of the three times I've re-read it, I've found new things.

The book hasn't changed, of course, but I have.

“Herr's Contempt For The Authorities Who Had Dumped American Troops Into Combat, His Matter-Of-Fact Depiction Of That Combat As Senseless, Dehumanizing, And Futile, Seemed Like Givens”

ON FIRST READING, the images Dispatches implanted in my mind were unquestionably harrowing: the corpse-strewn streets of ruined Hue, Vietnam’s imperial city; the spooky vistas of Khe Sanh, where the Marines endured near-perpetual fire from ghostly North Vietnamese divisions invisible in the jungle. But those blasted landscapes painted in swaggering rock 'n' roll brushstrokes were as remote from my own experiences as the implacable rituals of guilt and expiation in Greek drama — indeed, I naively thought the book offered overdue catharsis for the Vietnam tragedy and expressed a new national consensus about it.

Herr's contempt for the authorities who had dumped American troops into combat, his matter-of-fact depiction of that combat as senseless, dehumanizing, and futile, seemed like givens.

Didn’t everyone feel that way by 1978?

My liberal, urban friends certainly did, and few voices anywhere were being raised in defense of a military and political strategy whose ultimate fruits (helicopters evacuating the last Marines from the roof of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon while desperate, abandoned Vietnamese civilians swarmed the grounds below) were a painful recent memory.

What impressed me most forcefully about Dispatches was the window it opened on the surreal texture of ordinary soldier's lives.

Liberated from deadlines by his freeform assignment from Esquire magazine, Herr spent much of his time hanging around with grunts like the exhausted kid who replied to the standard question, “How long you been in-country?” by half-lifting his head and saying, very slowly, “all fuckin’ day,” or the soldier detailed on reconnaissance patrol who told the reporter that the pills he took by the fistful “cooled things out just right” and that “he could see that old jungle at night like he was looking at it through a starlight scope.”
Unlike his colleagues working for mainstream media, Herr was under no obligation to solicit and report the military command’s unwaveringly optimistic statements; instead, he listened to “grungy men in the jungle who talked bloody murder and killed people all the time,” men who despised sugar-coated official platitudes about what they were doing there as much as the most committed antiwar activist did.

Dispatches made it clear, I assumed, that hating the war didn’t mean hating those stuck with fighting it.

The virtually unanimous praise lavished on this searing text, the general conviction that it was a definitive portrait of the American experience in Vietnam, suggested that Vietnam was behind us now.

How young I was, and how much I missed.

I still didn’t get it in 1982, when I stood weeping in front of Maya Lin’s memorial lined with the names of Americans killed or missing in Vietnam from 1959 to 1975. Looking at the flowers and the handwritten notes placed along its black granite wall, testament to the anguish we still felt over the loss of so many lives, I couldn’t understand the veterans who angrily viewed the unconventional memorial as a “black gash of shame,” one more example of the way their service had been stigmatized.

I didn’t realize it then, but Vietnam was on its way to becoming the war we weren’t allowed to win.

During the 1980s, I heard that revolting phrase uttered with increasing frequency by people who sought to erase our national trauma, not by acknowledging the mistaken analysis that entangled us in Vietnam and the stubbornness that kept us there, but by shoehorning it into a conventional saga of courage and sacrifice in an honorable cause betrayed by the weak and the disloyal.

Every scathing word in Dispatches belied this pat scenario.

“Whatever Else, I’d Loved It There,”

WHEN I PICKED UP Herr’s book again in the late ‘80s, however, I became uncomfortably aware that it also belied my blithe collegiate certainties. The first time through, I had breezed right over Herr’s description of the questions people asked him upon his return as “political, square, innocent . . . I’d practically forgotten the language.” I didn’t even remember the troubling passage in which his pal Tim Page, solicited by a publisher to write a book that would “take the glamour out of war,” erupted with glee: “The very idea! Ohhh, what a laugh! Take the bloody glamour out of bloody war!”

Herr and his fellow misfits among the press corps, dope-smoking longhairs though they might have been, not so secretly saw themselves as belonging to the time-honored, movienourished image of the swashbuckling war correspondent. They hailed helicopters like taxis, hitching rides into places like Dak To and the Ia Drang Valley, where they risked their lives to observe the nightmare reality buried underneath words like body count and pacification.
Then they grabbed the next chopper out, heading back to Saigon to print their photos and write it all down. There was glamour in war, and they got to experience the buzz of combat from a uniquely privileged position.

“Whatever else, I’d loved it there,” Herr admitted.

Soldiers felt that way too, William Broyles Jr. acknowledged in “Why Men Love War,” a 1984 essay in Esquire, which I read not long before I tackled Dispatches for the second time.

Broyles probed war’s “great and seductive beauty,” the enduring comradeship created among men who trusted each other with their lives, the knowledge that in battle you touched the fundamentals of human existence.

A Vietnam vet, he didn’t scant the uglier aspects: the sense of power inherent in killing, the covert joy when someone else got wasted instead of you, the unpalatable fact that being surrounded by death was, in some weird ways, a turn-on.

His polished, articulate prose was light years removed from the pop-apocalyptic urgency with which Herr tried to capture the particular nature of Vietnam. And yet both conveyed a message I hadn’t been able to hear in 1978.

For those who were there, the Vietnam War, like every war, was horrible and wonderful, the greatest experience of their lives as well as the worst thing that ever happened to them.

There was an important political discussion to be had about Vietnam, but there was another level on which politics was beside the point.

Dispatches was more than simply a great book about Vietnam, I began to understand.

I spend a lot of my professional time interviewing authors, and over the years I heard several of them refer to Herr’s work with a reverence that bordered on awe.

Dispatches was “one of the greatest memoirs of all time,” remarked Mary Karr, no slouch in that department herself. “It intimidated the pants off me,” confessed novelist Bob Shacochis, who, when I talked with him, had recently completed a nonfiction portrait of American soldiers in Haiti. “I can’t imagine writing a better book than Dispatches; it’s a blast of genius.”

The blasts of Herr’s rage, scorn, and agonized tenderness have been disturbing my peace for nearly three decades now; few works in any genre have haunted me the way Dispatches has.

“I Realized That The Only Corpse I Couldn’t Bear To Look At Would Be The One Whose Face I Would Never Have To See”

IN 1999, IT REENTERED my life in the oddest way, forcing itself anew on my attention when I least expected it. I’d had a baby at age 39 and sank happily into the swamp of
my son’s all-consuming demands and my equally consuming love for him. The domestic world was my kingdom; war was one of those absurd male pastimes that had no relevance to me. (I know this is ridiculous: remember, I was a new mother.)

One day, reading a book about helicopters to my vehicle-obsessed four-year-old, I came across a photograph of a Huey landing under fire somewhere in South Vietnam. The next thing I knew, Dispatches was back in my hands.

It was placed there by my recollection of Herr’s amazing description of the Vietnam chopper: “the sexiest thing going; saver-destroyer, provider-waster, right hand-left hand, nimble, fluent, canny and human; hot steel, grease, jungle-saturated canvas webbing, sweat cooling and warming up again, cassette rock and roll in one ear and door-gun fire in the other, fuel, heat, vitality and death, death itself, hardly an intruder.”

Rereading that fabulous effusion, I remembered Mary Karr’s appreciative appraisal: “Just at the level of sentences, it’s never boring.” The third time around, I was swept away by the sheer magnificence of Herr’s prose as much as by what he had to say. Of course, the two were inextricably connected, and Dispatches had something new to say to me in my 40s.

The book was a personal testament, I belatedly grasped.

Herr wasn’t just showing me what the war did to other people; he was examining what it did to him. He was terrified, naturally — take a look at his defoliating depiction of being under fire:

That passage took me through Vietnam to the eternal terrain of stark, animal fear.

At its existential heart, Dispatches was about what happened to someone living for months on end with that kind of fear, about what the omnipresence of death did to your soul.

Herr summed it up for himself in a single bleak sentence. Walking through the streets of Hue during the Tet Offensive, past hundreds of bodies decomposing in the cold rain, he wrote, “I realized that the only corpse I couldn’t bear to look at would be the one whose face I would never have to see.”

The grunts’ moments of individual reckoning were blunter. “All that’s just a load, man,” said one young soldier, dismissing the domino theory and other official rationales. “We’re here to kill gooks. Period.”

Being a mother, I flinched at the thought of my son growing up to say something like that. Being a journalist, I flinched again at Herr’s sardonic addendum: “(That) wasn’t at all true of me. I was there to watch.”

I’d never covered a war or grilled a duplicitous politician, but anyone who writes nonfiction is familiar with the queasily mixed emotions inherent in using other people’s experiences as your raw material. Herr dissected that complex, fraught relationship in a situation where the stakes were mortally high.
He thought of himself as the grunts' brother, sharing their miseries and dangers in the field. On the surface, they seemed to agree. They gave him their helmets and flak jackets, found him mattresses to sleep on, threw blankets over him when he was cold. “You’re all right man,” they said, “you got balls.”

But then would come “that bad, bad moment . . . the look that made you look away,” or the comment of a rifleman watching a jeepload of correspondents drive off: “Those fucking guys, I hope they die.”

Then the distance was clear.

“They weren’t judging me, they weren’t reproaching me, they didn’t even mind me, not in any personal way,” Herr wrote. “They only hated me, hated me the way you’d hate any hopeless fool who would put himself through this thing when he had choices.”

He was not their brother, and he came to a conclusion many reporters prefer not to draw: “You were as responsible for everything you saw as you were for everything you did.”

There was only one way to honor that responsibility, and the grunts told him what it was.

“They would ask you with an emotion whose intensity would shock you to please tell it, because they really did have the feeling that it wasn’t being told for them, that they were going through all this and that somehow no one back in the World knew about it.”

Herr told as many of their stories as he could cram into a narrative burning with his fierce belief that “conventional journalism could no more reveal this war than conventional firepower could win it.”

He told the story of a freaked-out Marine, throwing away fatigues soaked with the blood of “some guy he didn’t even know (who) had been blown away right next to him, all over him.”

There was no way to wash them clean, the soldier said, near tears: “You could take and scrub them fatigues for a million years, and it would never happen.”

He told the story of a battalion in the midst of the Tet Offensive’s worst days, afflicted with despair so terrible that men from Graves Registration going through the personal effects of dead soldiers sometimes found letters from home “delivered days before and still unopened.”

All wars produce horror stories, but in most wars before Vietnam reporters were constrained from telling them, by censorship, of course, but also by their sense that there was a greater goal that at least partly justified the horrors.

Herr cared very little about the big picture — and who could blame him, when one month Khe Sanh fit into the big picture as “the Western Anchor of our Defense” and the next it was “a worthless piece of ground”? 
He cared more about what he could learn from the Special Forces captain who said, “I went out and killed one VC and liberated a prisoner. Next day the major called me in and told me that I’d killed fourteen VC and liberated six prisoners. You want to see the medal?”

“What They Understood And Their Leaders Refused To Acknowledge Was That Battles And “Victories” Didn’t Add Up To Anything”

THE HUMAN TRUTHS of Dispatches were also political truths,

I could see when I angrily reopened it on the eve of the 2006 midterm elections.

Because Vietnam was an unpopular war that we lost, it was possible for Herr to say things about the essential nature of combat that it had been unacceptable to say about, for example, World War II. (The U.S. Army was so upset by John Huston’s Signal Corps documentary about veterans suffering from what we would now call post-traumatic stress disorder that it suppressed the film for more than 30 years.)

Herr took full advantage of that freedom.

He took very seriously his commitment to tell the grunts’ stories, but he made no pretense of telling them from the grunts’ point of view, and he told stories they undoubtedly wished he’d kept to himself.

He wasn’t “embedded,” the cynical tactic invented by the Bush administration to enmesh reporters in a conflict they were supposed to be covering impartially. “I crossed the line from observer to participant,” said Time correspondent Michael Weisskopf, who lost his right hand when he picked up a live grenade tossed into the Humvee carrying him and four soldiers on patrol in Baghdad. “It became very difficult to objectively assess the role of U.S. soldiers who were housing, feeding, befriending and protecting me. After three weeks in a platoon, I came dangerously close to adopting the mindset and mission of a soldier.”

Herr never fell into that trap.

His affection for the grunts didn’t prevent him from seeing what Vietnam had done to some of them. “They were killers,” he wrote of the soldiers hunkered down at Khe Sanh. “Of course they were; what would anyone expect them to be?”

With the appalling photographs from Abu Ghraib still vivid in my memory, I found my fourth journey through Dispatches halted time after time by grim glimpses of the atrocities committed in Vietnam.

Herr heard stories about “the man in the Highlands who was ‘building his own gook,’ parts were the least of his troubles”; about the door gunner, asked how he could shoot women and children, who replied, “It’s easy, you just don’t lead ‘em so much.”

He saw a photo of a Marine “pissing into the locked-open mouth of a decomposing North Vietnamese soldier”; albums with pictures of smiling soldiers holding up severed heads
or necklaces of ears. “There were hundreds of those albums in Vietnam, thousands,” he noted wearily. The inevitable snapshot of a dead Viet Cong woman stripped naked was inevitably accompanied by “that same tired remark you heard every time . . . ‘No more boom-boom for that mamma-san.’”

Herr was sickened by what he saw and heard, but he didn’t judge the grunts. He knew what they were up against.

The North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were not good guys; he observed without surprise that they were supplied by the Soviets and the Chinese, that they were responsible for plenty of atrocities themselves.

What unnerved American soldiers about their enemy — and drove the brass purely crazy — was that he wasn’t playing by their rules.

Over and over, Herr described major battles with massive casualties on both sides that didn’t so much end as stop when the North Vietnamese picked up most of their dead and vanished into the jungle.

Command proclaimed them victories, but it was hard to feel victorious at the top of Dak To’s Hill 875, which hundreds of Americans had died to take, where there were exactly four Vietnamese bodies.

“How many more died, hundreds more,” Herr wrote, “but the corpses kicked and counted and photographed and buried numbered four. . . . Spooky. Everything up there was spooky . . . you were there in a place where you didn’t belong.”

The grunts knew it, and they didn’t make their commanders’ mistake of underestimating their opponents.

While a colonel in Saigon was declaring that the enemy “no longer maintains in our view capability to mount, execute or sustain a serious offensive action,” out in the countryside soldiers were looking around uneasily, saying, “Charlie’s up to something. Slick, slick, that fucker’s so slick. Watch!”

What they understood and their leaders refused to acknowledge was that battles and “victories” didn’t add up to anything.

“They killed a lot of Communists, but that was all they did,” Herr wrote of the campaign in the Vietnamese highlands.

“The number of Communist dead meant nothing, changed nothing.”

Iraq is not Vietnam. The desert is not the jungle.

“It’s Beyond Politics, But We Ignore, And Have Ignored, Its Political Lessons At Our Peril”

The Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese Army, infuriatingly hard to pin down though they were, were miracles of coherence compared to the rat’s nest of sectarian death
squads and fundamentalist splinter groups accountable to who knows who that toss IEDs at American jeeps in the streets of Baghdad and Mosul.

What is shockingly, shamingly similar is the arrogance, criminal blindness, and willful obfuscation that ensnared America in both places.

In 2006, no other sentence in Dispatches distressed me more than an almost casual aside in the midst of Herr’s exegesis of “the bloody, maddening uncanniness” of Vietnam’s terrain.

“There is a point of view,” he wrote, “that says that the United States got involved in the Vietnam War, commitments and interests aside, simply because we thought it would be easy.”

Like all great books, Dispatches is inexhaustible. I have learned from it, changed with it, made mistakes about it. It was never the document of national reconciliation I once thought it was.

It was and is the timeless portrait of war’s bedrock realities — fear, death, murder, madness — that I was finally ready to confront in my 30s.

It’s also a revelation of the beauty that unfolds in extreme circumstances, the clarity of vision possible when everything extraneous has fallen away. It’s a brazen display of unbridled romanticism and extravagant prose.

It’s a chastening exploration of our complicity in what we see from a safe distance.

It’s beyond politics, but we ignore, and have ignored, its political lessons at our peril.

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AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

Soldier From 14th Signal Regiment Killed In Afghanistan

16 October 2013 Ministry of Defence

It is with great sadness that the Ministry of Defence must confirm that Lance Corporal James Brynin of the Intelligence Corps was killed in action in Helmand province, Afghanistan, on Tuesday 15 October 2013.

Lance Corporal Brynin, an Intelligence Corps soldier attached to 14th Signal Regiment (Electronic Warfare), deployed to Task Force Helmand in August 2013 as an intelligence analyst working for a Light Electronic Warfare Team within the Brigade Reconnaissance Force (BRF) of 7th Armoured Brigade.
In the early hours of 15 October, the BRF deployed from Camp Bastion into the Nahr-e Saraj district of Helmand province to counter an imminent threat to both the Afghan population and the International Security Assistance Force.

Towards the end of the operation Lance Corporal Brynin’s section became the target of enemy fire. Together with a sniper and machine gunner of the BRF, Lance Corporal Brynin returned fire, but while extracting from the area he received a fatal gunshot wound.

Army CID Special Agent Killed in Afghanistan

CID Special Agent Joseph M. Peters. United States Army

October 8, 2013 Officer.com News

A special agent with the Army’s Criminal Investigation Division was among four soldiers killed in an attack in Afghanistan on Sunday.

Sgt. Joseph M. Peters succumbed to injuries sustained when his unit encountered an improvised explosive device in the Kandahar Province, according to a news release.

The 24-year-old Springfield, Mo. native was assigned to the 286th Military Police Detachment, 5th Military Police Battalion in Vicenza, Italy.

Peters was the first special agent for CID to be killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Also killed in the attack were 1st Lt. Jennifer M. Moreno, Sgt. Patrick C. Hawkins, and Pfc. Cody J. Patterson.

"Special Agent Peters was a highly respected agent and soldier who sacrificed his life in the defense of this nation," Major General David Quantock, the Provost Marshal General of the United States Army and Commanding General of the United States Army Criminal Investigation Command said in a statement. "We are extremely proud of his service and what he accomplished as a CID Special Agent and as a Soldier. His death is a reminder
to all of us of the unequaled contributions our military members and their families make on a daily basis in the defense of the freedoms that we all enjoy and value so dearly."

Peters was a member of the U.S. Army for six years and had served two deployments in Iraq before being assigned to Afghanistan. He is survived by his wife and 20-month-old son.

He was posthumously awarded the Combat Action Badge, Bronze Star Medal and Purple Heart.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

POLITICIANS REFUSE TO HALT THE BLOODSHED
THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE WAR

Insurgent Missile Attack His U.S. Bagram Airfield

Oct 14 By Ghanizada, Khaama Press

According to local authorities in northern Parwan province of Afghanistan, Taliban militants fired at least 12 missiles on US-run Bagram airfield late Sunday night.

The officials further added that there are no reports regarding the casualties and damages as a result of the missile attack.

District chief for Bagram, Abdul Shakoor Qadusi confirming the report said militants fired nearly 12 missiles on US-run Bagram airbase, however, he said there are no reports regarding the casualties.

Mr. Qadusi further added that militants fired the missiles from the mountainous regions, and no suspect has been arrested in connection to the incident so far.

In the meantime, Taliban group claimed responsibility behind the attack and said heavy casualties were incurred to US military forces.

Microphone Bomb Blows Up Afghan Governor
KABUL, Afghanistan – A provincial governor and close confidante of President Hamid Karzai was assassinated by a bomb hidden in a microphone that exploded as he spoke at a mosque Tuesday, officials said.

Arsala Jamal, the governor of Logar province, near the capital Kabul, was killed at 8.45 a.m. local time (12.15 a.m. ET) as he spoke after prayers celebrating the Islamic holiday, Eid.

15 people were injured in the attack but there were no other fatalities, according to Din Mohammad Darwish, spokesman for Jamal's office.

Darwish said the bombing took place at the main mosque in the provincial capital of Puli Alam.

Jamal, an ethnic Pashtun who was in his 40s, had previously survived four suicide attacks and served as a Minister of Tribal and Frontier Affairs.

He was the deputy campaign manager for Karzai in the 2009 presidential elections.

Fazlullah Mujaddedi, the governor of Laghman province, posted on his Facebook page that the bomb was placed in Jamal’s microphone and detonated as he began his Eid greetings.

The country’s ministry for local governance issued a statement confirming the incident, adding that the bomb was placed by the "enemies of Afghanistan", a term that usually refers to the Taliban.
Syria:
“Rebel Fighters Have Downed A Fighter Jet”

10.13.13 Syrian Observatory for Human Rights

Der'a province: Reports that rebel fighters have downed a fighter jet that was flying over the town of Atman, residents in the area stated that they witnessed a plane going down in the sky.

The airforce bombarded parts of Der'a al-Balad several times, as well as the town of Na'ima.
Rebels Kill Top Syrian Intelligence Chief:  
“General Jameh Jameh Has Been A Household Name Of Terror In The Province Even Before The Uprising”  
“People Across Deir Al-Zour Are Celebrating His Death”

October 17 By Loveday Morris, The Washington Post [Excerpts]

BEIRUT — A senior Syrian intelligence chief has been killed by rebel forces in the eastern province of Deir al-Zour, the opposition and Syrian state media said Thursday, as the rebels claimed new gains in the region.

Gen. Jameh Jameh, who led the Syrian military intelligence unit in the province, died “carrying out his mission in defending Syria,” state television said in a report. It gave no details, but Lt. Col. Mohammad Abboud, a top rebel commander for the eastern front, said Jameh, 59, was fatally shot near his home in the al-Joura neighborhood of Deir al-Zour city, the provincial capital.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said rebel snipers shot Jameh in the midst of a battle.

Jameh, one of Syria’s most powerful generals, was frequently linked to the 2005 car-bomb assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, a former Lebanese prime minister and an outspoken critic of the Syrian army’s presence in his country.

Jameh, who was based in Beirut at the time, was questioned by U.N. investigators in relation to the assassination.

On his return to Syria, he was appointed chief of Syrian military intelligence in Deir al-Zour and soon gained a fearsome reputation.

“General Jameh Jameh has been a household name of terror in the province even before the uprising,” said Hassan Hassan, a Syria analyst and columnist for the Abu Dhabi-based National newspaper and a native of the province.

“After the uprising, he was even more brutal, running an intricate web of informants and agents. People across Deir al-Zour are celebrating his death.”

In 2011, the European Union imposed sanctions on Jameh, saying he had been “directly involved in violence against the civilian population” of Deir al-Zour.
Although the war has been reduced to a grinding stalemate on many front lines in recent months, and the rebels have been distracted by side battles against jihadists and Kurds, the opposition says it is making progress against the government in the eastern province with an operation known as “One Body.”

Abboud said rebel forces, including Jabhat al-Nusra, have launched a fresh assault to take control of strategic government footholds in the province over the past three days.

He claimed gains near the Deir al-Zour military airport, with heavy clashes on Thursday night.

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**FORWARD OBSERVATIONS**

“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

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Entre los individuos, como entre las naciones, el respeto al derecho ajeno es la paz.
-- Benito Juárez
ANNIVERSARIES

October 16, 1859:
The Second American Revolution Begins;
“The Crimes Of This Guilty Land Will Never Be Purged Away But With Blood”

Mural by John Steuart Curry (1937-1942)

Abolitionist John Brown led a group of 21 other men, five black and sixteen white, in a raid on the U.S. arsenal at Harper’s Ferry, Virginia.

They had hoped to set off a slave revolt, throughout the south, with the weapons they had planned to seize. Virtually all his compatriots were killed or captured by Gen. Robert E. Lee’s troops; Brown was wounded and arrested, and hanged for treason within two months.

Before hearing his sentence, Brown was allowed make an address to the court.
“. . . I believe to have interfered as I have done, . . . in behalf of His despised poor, was not wrong, but right. “Now, if it be deemed necessary that I should forfeit my life for the furtherance of the ends of justice, and mingle my blood further with the blood of my children, and with the blood of millions in this slave country whose rights are disregarded by wicked, cruel, and unjust enactments, I submit: so let it be done.”

“Had I interfered in the manner which I admit, and which I admit has been fairly proved (for I admire the truthfulness and candor of the greater portion of the witnesses who have testified in this case), -- had I so interfered in behalf of the rich, the powerful, the intelligent, the so-called great, or in behalf of any of their friends -- either father, mother, sister, wife, or children, or any of that class -- and suffered and sacrificed what I have in this interference, it would have been all right; and every man in this court would have deemed it an act worthy of reward rather than punishment.”

Although initially shocked by Brown’s exploits, many Northerners began to speak favorably of the militant abolitionist.

“He did not recognize unjust human laws, but resisted them as he was bid. . . .,” said Henry David Thoreau in an address to the citizens of Concord, Massachusetts. “No man in America has ever stood up so persistently and effectively for the dignity of human nature. . . .”

John Brown was hanged on December 2, 1859.

On the day of his death he wrote: “I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood.”
October 17, 1898:
Shameful Anniversary:
The American Empire Destroys Puerto Rican Independence

One year after Spain granted Puerto Rican self-rule following their rout in the Spanish-American War, troops raised the U.S. flag over the Caribbean island nation, formalizing American authority over the island’s one million inhabitants.

Admirable Anniversary:
October 18, 1648:
Americans Organize For Self-Defense
GOT A COMMENT?
Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe.

OCCUPATION PALESTINE

The Jenin Man With “Minor Injuries”
This Story Begins On The Night Of The 20th Of August When Zionist Soldiers Attacked The Refugee Camp In Jenin:
“One Of The People Who According To The IDF Spokesman Had Sustained ‘Minor Injuries’ Remains Paralyzed From His Waist Down And Is Now Incontinent”
“The Resistance Of The Residents Of Jenin To The Frequent Invasions To Their Homes Was Defined By Yoav (Poli)
Mordehai, The IDF Spokesman, As ‘Terrorism’”

Oct 5 2013 By Tamar Fleishman, PalestineChronicle.com. Translated by Ruth Fleishman

As a member of Machsomwatch, once a week Tamar Fleishman heads out to document the checkpoints between Jerusalem and Ramallah.

This documentation (reports, photos and videos) can be found on the organization’s site: www.machsomwatch.org.

The majority of the Spotlights (an opinion page) that are published on the site had been written by her. She is also a member of the Coalition of Women for Peace and volunteer in Breaking the Silence. She contributed this article to PalestineChronicle.com.

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I don’t know his name.

But I know the clear gaze of his eyes through which deep desperation was reflected, and the time that passed hasn’t dissolved or dulled the memory of the shadow of grief that was cast upon him and his mother.

I know it is my duty to write and present those who are not represented, to tell and spread the story and shout out that a human being is not a statistic, that a human being is a human being, that he is the sum of all his expectations, hopes and dreams, and the he too, that young and handsome man must have had expectations, hopes, wishes and dreams.
Perhaps he was a good man and perhaps he wasn’t, but he was a human being, and he had his life and he had his youth.

And now, all these have been lost, since one bitter instant that had turned him into a soul in a shell, without hopes, aspirations or dreams, aside for the nightmares he must have regarding his future.

This story begins on the night of the 20th of August when soldiers from the Kfir unit invaded the refugee camp in Jenin, for what they call an “Operational Activity” which resulted with “one dead and several suffering from minor injuries”- as was reported by the IDF spokesman.

The resistance of the residents of Jenin to the frequent invasions to their homes was defined by Yoav (Poli) Mordehai, the IDF spokesman, as “terrorism” and he also added that:

“The forces’ activity was part of the nightly arrests, and such arrests are a critical instrument that enables them to put a stop terror before it develops. Such arrests are a daily procedure that makes it possible for the residents of the state of Israel and the residents of Judea and Samaria to live in peace”.

One of the people who according to the IDF spokesman had sustained “minor injuries”, arrived by ambulance at Qalandiya checkpoint on his way back home from the hospital in Jerusalem, where he had received treatment on the previous night.

The doctors managed to save the life of the young man who sustained an injury to his pelvis by a live bullet, but they couldn’t save his body.

He remains paralyzed from his waist down and is now incontinent.

With her face looking down, his mother stood beside her son’s headboard.

She saw him in need of the assistance of strangers and knew that this was the reality that was forced upon him for the rest of his life and upon her for the rest of hers.

Only the soldiers, who swarmed the ambulance with pointing rifles, looked through packages and stared at what was going on, didn’t think they were witnessing something that was so wrong it should not have taken place.

They did what was demanded of them, they fulfilled the orders, they made sure everything happened according to regulations and maintained the daily routine, and doing so their faces conveyed no emotions and their gestures indicated no discomfort.
Israel Detains 30 Member Of Same Hebron Family: “Military Forces Surrounded The House, Broke Into It And Forced All The Family Members Outside” Occupation Officials Ban Family Members From Video Taping The Incident

04 October 2013 PNN

Israeli occupation forces detained around 30 members of the Salhab family that resides near the illegal settlement of Beit Hagai, south of Hebron, under the pretext that Israeli soldiers were exposed to stone-throwing.

Ahmed Salhab, a family member, said that military forces came in three military jeeps, surrounded the house, broke into it and forced all the family members outside.

Salhab also said that a fight erupted between the family members and Israeli troops after the family protested against the IOF harassment and breaking into their house without giving reasonable reasons.

He added, Israeli officials banned his family members from video taping the incident.

Israeli army claimed that its troops were exposed to stone-throwing near the vicinity of the settlement and that a surveillance camera had documented the incident.

Salhab considers the provocative raids of Palestinian homes as part of Israel's policy to expel the families from their homes in order to seize land and increase illegal settlements in the West Bank.

Zionist Settler Terror Mobs Attack Palestinian Farmer And Chop Down Olive Trees Near Occupied Nablus, As Usual
10/6/2013 Ma'an

NABLUS – Extremist Jewish settlers chopped down more than 100 olive trees Saturday morning in Deir Sharaf village south of Nablus, a Palestinian official said.

Ghassan Daghlas, who monitors settler activities in the northern West Bank, told Ma'an that settlers from Shave Shomron settlement stormed olive fields in the al-Ghazan neighborhood of Deir Sharaf and destroyed more than 100 trees.

He highlighted that the attack came a few days before the olive harvest.

The trees belong to Yasser Fuqaha, Sidqi Fuqaha, Mustafa Fuqaha and other farmers from the Meri family.

On Friday, a mob of settlers assaulted Palestinian farmer Abdul-Rahman Ibrahim Awad while he was picking olives in his field in Jammain village south of Nablus.

He was forced to leave the field at gunpoint after the assailants completely destroyed his private vehicle.

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation commanded by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves “Israeli.”]
Anti-government protesters set fire to a police car after a protest supporting a teachers strike in Rio de Janeiro October 15, 2013. The protest demanded changes in the public state and municipal education system. REUTERS/Ricardo Moraes

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