THE LESSON OF IWO JIMA

Iwo Jima. This is Mount Suribachi from the air. The memorial where the Marines planted the American flag in Joe Rosenthal's iconic photo is at the bare patch on the rim above the area of white rocks on the right.

I took the picture flying here with over 30 Marines who fought here 70 years ago, all in their late 80s-early 90s today. The experience of walking the black sands of Iwo Jima and standing on top of Suribachi with them was emotionally overpowering.

I took this picture of Sgt. John Roy Coltrane on Suribachi with Invasion Beach below...

But when I shook his hand to thank him for his heroism, my voice cracked and I fought off tears.

This is the 70th anniversary of the Marine victory at Iwo Jima, and you may have seen the news stories. Here's one from the London Daily Mail. The battle was fought from February 19 to March 26, 1945 - 36 days in which 6,871 Marines were killed and 19, 217 wounded (out of a total invasion force of some 70,000).

Of the 22,000 Japanese soldiers on the island, 216 were taken prisoner. Close to 21,800 were killed, killed themselves, or died of thirst and starvation hiding in the miles of tunnels they had dug.

The total ferocity with which the battle was fought is what makes it so legendary - that and of course, Rosenthal's picture...

It was taken on the fifth day, February 23. Why it's so iconic - many professional photographers consider it the greatest ever taken - is summarized by NYU history professor Ruth Ben-Ghiat:

> "Its dynamic and masterful composition is part of the secret. The flag structures the picture, its diagonal back-leaning position contrasting with the forward motion of the soldiers.
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> They seem to rise out of the ash and other detritus of the battlefield, and there is already something sculptural in their massed bodies, in their muscular legs and arms that strain to hoist up the heavy pole. The leg of the lead bearer crosses the flagpole, adding a further sense of solidity.
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> There is something deeply reassuring about this photograph in its display of strength and teamwork -- even the last man, who can no longer touch the flagpole, 'has the back' of his comrades -- and its communication of a push forward to victory."

There are six men, five Marines and one Navy corpsman - from right to left, Cpl. Harlon Block, Pfc. Rene Gagnon mostly hidden behind Corpsman John Bradley, Sgt. Michael Strank mostly hidden by Pfc. Frank Sousley, and Pfc. Ira Hayes.

If you've seen Clint Eastwood's 2006 film *Flags of Our Fathers* (based on the book of the same

title written by John Bradley's son James), you know that Block, Strank, and Sousley were killed later in the battle. The remaining three suffered from "survivor guilt" and the incredible pressures put upon them by sudden (and they felt undeserved) fame.

Bradley was especially traumatized by what happened to his best buddy in his platoon, Ralph Ignatowski. They were taking fire when another Marine was hit, to whom Bradley rushed to aid. When he returned, Ralph was gone - he had been dragged into a tunnel by Japanese soldiers who tortured him to death.

Bradley found Ralph's body after the tunnel had been cleared - his teeth had been smashed in, his tongue cut out, his ears cut off, his eyeballs plucked out, his fingernails pulled off, his arms broken, the back of his head turned to bloody pulp, and bayonets plunged repeatedly into his stomach.

It's hard to consider the perpetrators of such barbarian savagery as human beings. And prior to their defeat in World War II, they weren't - they had progressively become sub-human. The same thing happened to the Germans as they became Nazis. After the war, they ceased being sub-human and became civilized again. What happened?

They were more than just defeated - they were forced to abjectly and unconditionally surrender. America fought for nothing less than absolute *victory*, here on Iwo Jima, and at Hiroshima-Nagasaki.

As explained in Runway Able (October 2010), getting nuked was the best thing that ever happened to the Japanese people. The explanation needs some elaboration here: it was getting nuked *by America* that was the best thing that ever happened to the Japanese.

All the liberal angst about our using The Bomb on them is drivel. The total shock of being nuked changed them from being savages to being civilized.

Here's the thought experiment to consider: imagine how we Americans would have been treated in defeat had Japan won. We would have all ended up like Ralph Ignatowski. That's one lesson of Iwo Jima.

We really need to reflect on the vast moral abyss between how we treated the Japanese in defeat and how they would have treated us had they won. We treated Japan humanely, not savagely, demanding not their subjugation but giving them their liberation instead. We were almost superhumanly magnanimous, as we were with Germany as well.

The result? There has been a genuine peace between America and Japan - and America and Germany - for 70 years. The reason? The Japanese are not the same people as they were before and during World War II - ever since they have been a morally better people, because of the way we defeated them and treated them after doing so.

Are you waiting for the other shoe to drop? Note that although we won the Cold War with the Soviet Union, this has not happened with the Russians - which is why Russia remains our enemy.

Soviet Communism was fully as murderously evil as German Nazism and Japanese Imperialism. Stalin was a far greater mass-murderer than Hitler as he was in power for 30 years (1922-1952) compared to Hitler's 12 (1933-1945). The collectivist-totalitarian moral values of the Soviet Russians were the antithesis of ours - which we did not demand they change.

We thus threw away our victory in the Cold War. We did not demand the collapsed Soviet regime turn over its nukes. We did not demand an apology from the Soviet Russians for their evil Communism, an admission of guilt. We did not demand they create an actual democracy and rule of law, with actual elections and honest judges administering actual law based on human rights and freedoms.

Thus we have this little gangster thug strutting the world, invading neighboring countries and threatening others. The Russians have not changed, because we did not force them to. We wasted our victory over them and are now paying the price. That's another lesson of Iwo Jima.

Here's a third. We were victorious on Iwo Jima, we won World War II because we were 100% determined to. We've never been that way since. When in the last 70 years have we fought a war we wanted to win, viscerally all-up-all-in determined to win?

Not South Korea, where we fought to a draw. Certainly not Vietnam, where we lost because we had no intention of winning. Clearly not the Cold War. Afghanistan? Iraq? Obviously not given the mess both are in. Now we are confronted with the sub-human depravity of ISIS - where is any determination to do what is necessary: wipe them off the face of the earth and quickly?

That's what the Marines who stormed these black sands of Iwo Jima and fought their way to the top of Suribachi were determined to do with an evil enemy.

Their victory here, won with heroism on an almost unimaginable level - as Admiral Chester Nimitz said of them, "Uncommon valor was a common virtue" - not only enabled America to remain free, but to eradicate that evil infesting the souls of that enemy. Thus ending their being our (and humanity's) enemy, but our ally in peace.

This is the ultimate lesson of Iwo Jima for us at this moment in history 70 years later. Real victory means eradicating the evil infesting the souls of people who are a curse on mankind. The Japanese were that curse and are no longer. The Germans were that curse and are no longer. Far too many Moslems are now today, while Russians are rapidly becoming so again.

How best to enable Russians and Moslems (and Chicoms and Democrats for that matter) from blighting humanity is beyond the scope of this essay. That's why it will be a topic of discussion at the Vegas Platinum Rendezvous. One of many that will make it absolutely worth your while to be there.

It's one month away - April 24-26. There is simply no where else you will get more valuable information about what's going on in the world - and have a better time doing so - than at the Vegas Platinum Rendezvous.

Being here on Iwo Jima gives you an indescribably profound pride in being an American. What other people on earth are so capable of such physical and moral courage? What will it take to revive that same courage today?

That courage is not lost, it's only dormant. We can bring it to life again, for after all, we are *Americans* - the same flesh and blood and moral heritage as those heroes who were here 70 years ago.

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