

New Poetry by Ben White: “Cleaning the M60 – 39 Years and January 26, 1984”

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TO FLESH BONE / *image by Amalie
Flynn*

39 Years

The death
Of a soldier
Was an accident,
A waste –
 A shame,
So the anniversary
Is nothing to celebrate –
 Or forget

January 26, 1984

Back on the continent
At the 1st and 51st Infantry –
A battalion that doesn't exist anymore –
The Cold War was fighting a strange peace
With weapons and tension
Wanting to release a dimension
 Of battle prepared,
 Trained for,
 And ultimately expected
While volunteers selected
Stood ready in the West
And along the borders
 Awaiting orders to mobilize
When one cold January,

Thursday morning
Soldiers had to realize
The power of 7.62 mm ammo
Tumbling into the chest
 Of a brother in the band
With manslaughter unplanned
And wounds giving the medics
An ambulance to ride in
 Until the doctors
 At the Krankenhaus
Opened up the chest
And showed them what
One M60 round
 Can do
To flesh,
Bone, and what
A few minutes ago
Had been functioning,
 Distinguishable organs.