

## **The Christmas Truce of 1914: Abolish All Wars. Indict Today's War Criminals in High Office**

Under the Nuremberg Charter, wars of aggression are the ultimate crime: "The Crime against Peace". US and allied troops have a Duty to Disobey unlawful orders

By [Prof Michel Chossudovsky](#)

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*The Christmas Truce of 1914 was an initiative of the soldiers on both sides; it was a mark of human solidarity and fraternity against the political and military architects of World War I.*

The Spirit of Christmas in December 1914 prevailed:

*"In the front lines, the fraternisation of Christmas Eve is continued throughout the day; not all units know about it, and it is not universal but is widespread over at least half of the British front. Many bodies that have been lying out in no man's land are buried, some in joint burials. Many men record the strange and wonderful events; many men exchange tokens or addresses with German soldiers, many of whom speak English. 81 British soldiers die on this day; a few die in areas that are otherwise peaceful and with fraternisation going on, victims of alert snipers. In other areas, there is considerable activity: 2nd Grenadier Guards suffer losses in a day of heavy fighting. As night fell, things grew quiet as men fell back to their trenches to take whatever Christmas meal that had been provided for them."*

# Revealed: Secrets of 1914 Christmas truce

By Martin Sklar

IT WAS one of the most poignant moments of the Great War – with British and German soldiers emerging from the trenches to share a smoking pipe, and some men of the sandlot of the First World War's Christmas Day truce has been revealed in a new account.

Captain Robert Hamilton, of the 1st Battalion, Royal Warwickshire Regiment, was at the heart of those magical five hours.

His grandson, former history teacher Andrew Hamilton, was inspired to read his grandfather's diary and other illustrations and documents after his daughter visited the battlefield with her school.

He and his cousin Alan Boyd have drawn on more than 100 photographs, cartoons, maps and sketches to write a book.

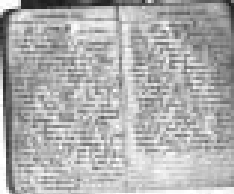
Mr Hamilton's daughter Alice took the diary with her on a school trip to the battlefields of France and Belgium.

Mr Boyd was one of the last soldiers. "This gave him the story to look at."

"We found we both shared a deep interest in the First World War and agreed to research my



The truce illustrated in this cartoon was also recorded by Captain Robert Hamilton, left, in his diary before



grandfather's experiences," Mr Hamilton told Watson, Warwickshire, said yesterday.

"For the 1st 'and Christmas morning, my grandfather's company broke up and jumping the road just where to meet a German officer, two miles from the Belgian border

of St Yvan on Christmas Day." Writing in his small, leather-bound journal for December 21, 1914, Captain Hamilton wrote:

"A description of the world's history. I met two officers and exchanged a few sentences for all hours." He added: "The soldiers on

both sides met in their trenches and exchanged greetings and gifts."

Captain Hamilton returned to England in 1918 after being wounded in the battle. The book, *Men at Dawn*, thousands, has just been published.

The Military High Command on both sides was firmly opposed to the Spirit of Christmas in the trenches. The *Mot d'ordre* of the French and British high command was to promote an "offensive spirit" in the trenches. In the words of General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, **"Friendly intercourse with the enemy, unofficial armistices, however tempting and amusing they may be, are absolutely prohibited"**:

Instructions were issued to commanders of all Divisions:

*"such an attitude is however most dangerous for it discourages initiative in commanders and **destroys the offensive spirit in all ranks...**the Corps Commander therefore directs Divisional Commanders to impress on subordinate commanders the absolute necessity of encouraging offensive spirit..."*

## Lessons of the 1914 Christmas Truce

The military oath taken at the time of induction demands unbending support and allegiance to the US Constitution, while also demanding that US troops obey orders from their President and Commander in Chief Donald Trump:

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God"

Both president Donald Trump as well as his predecessor Barack Obama not to mention George W. Bush have blatantly violated all tenets of domestic and international law.

So that making an oath to "obey orders from the President" is tantamount to violating rather than defending the US Constitution.

“The fact that a person [e.g. Coalition troops] acted pursuant to order of his Government or of a superior does not relieve him from responsibility under international law, provided a moral choice was in fact possible to him.”

Anti-war sentiment alone will not result in abolishing all wars.

An effective grass roots resistance against war requires a movement within the ranks of US-NATO Armed Forces to disobey orders. That is the message of the 1914 Christmas Truce. Lay down your arms, disobey orders emanating from wars criminal in high office.

And once a movement of members of the Armed Forces of all ranks integrates a civilian grassroots protest movement, with soldiers refusing to fight, the US-NATO military agenda will be in shatters.

The issue of war propaganda must also be addressed including the indoctrination of those serving in the Armed Forces. The official US-NATO motto is: Going after the bad guys, waging a “Global War on Terrorism” against so-called “jihadists”.

What is not mentioned is that the jihadist are mercenaries, trained and financed by US-NATO and their allies.

Without the gush of daily (corporate) media disinformation which upholds US-NATO led wars as humanitarian endeavours under the banner of “Responsibility to Protect” (R2P), the war-makers in high office would have no leg to stand on.

Within the corporate media, journalists also have the choice to “disobey orders” and many of them are doing so, as well as joining the ranks of the independent media.

This is the spirit of Christmas which we wish to uphold, based on the Lessons of the Christmas Truce of December 1914.

May Peace and the Spirit of Christmas prevail!

Abolish All Wars! indict the War Criminal in high Office.

Restore sanity in international diplomacy.

**Michel Chossudovsky, Global Research, December 25, 2018, December 24, 2019, December 25, 2020**

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## **The Christmas Truce of 1914**

**by 1914-1918.net**

*The Christmas Truce has become an enduring image of the triumph of man’s spirit over adversity. What really happened in no man’s land between British and German infantry in December 1914, and who was there?*

Once the fighting of the **First Battle of Ypres** died down in November 1914, British units

that had been holding the Ypres Salient were relieved by French ones. By December, the BEF had moved and was now holding a continuous sector of the Western Front from a little south of St Eloi, round past Armentières to Neuve Chapelle, past Festubert and to the La Bassée Canal at Givenchy.

The British force in France now consisted of the shattered units of the regular army, most of which had been all but destroyed at Ypres and which were in the process of being rebuilt by receiving new drafts, with the welcome addition of two Divisions making up the Indian Corps and some units of the Territorial Force.

The position being held consisted of crude trenches and breastworks. The weather had been continuously wet for some time, and conditions were particularly trying.

The static and dull nature of trench warfare and the close proximity of the enemy (which meant that they could be heard, and their breakfast cooking smelled, although rarely seen) caused many men to be curious about the men they were facing. They were certainly facing the same conditions of wet and cold, and in a strange way a mutual respect developed.

There were occasional shouted conversations between trenches, and the odd instance of exchange of goods, although to be too adventurous was foolhardy for men were continually lost to sniper fire.

## **Build up to the truce**

Under strong French pressure to take the initiative, the army was ordered into a series of small piecemeal attacks that proved to be very costly. Cut down by rifle and machine gun fire and unable to enter enemy trenches, the attacking units left many casualties lying in no man's land and on the enemy barbed wire defences.

## **5 December 1914**

II Corps HQ [General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien] issued an instruction to commanders of all Divisions:

"It is during this period that the greatest danger to the morale of troops exists. Experience of this and of every other war proves undoubtedly that troops in trenches in close proximity to the enemy slide very easily, if permitted to do so, into a "live and let live" theory of life...officers and men sink into a military lethargy from which it is difficult to arouse them when the moment for great sacrifices again arises...the attitude of our troops can be readily understood and to a certain extent commands sympathy...such an attitude is however most dangerous for it discourages initiative in commanders and destroys the offensive spirit in all ranks...the Corps Commander therefore directs Divisional Commanders to impress on subordinate commanders the absolute necessity of encouraging offensive spirit... **friendly intercourse with the enemy, unofficial armistices, however tempting and amusing they may be, are absolutely prohibited**"

## **The early weeks of December 1914**

Tremendous volumes of mail and gifts for the troops were sent from homes in the United Kingdom and Germany. King George V sent a Christmas card to every soldier, sailor and nurse; the Princess Mary fund despatched a gift box to every serving soldier.

## **14 December 1914**

An attack of 8th Brigade at Wytschaete on 14 December 1914 fails with heavy casualties. 18 December 1914 An attack by 22nd Brigade [2nd Queen's and 2nd Royal Warwickshire] on the Well Farm position at La Boutillerie fails with heavy casualties.

A further effort [by 20th Brigade; 2nd Scots Guards and 2nd Border] later in the day also fails. 19 December 1914 An attack by 11th Brigade [1st Somerset Light Infantry, 1st Hampshire and 1st Rifle Brigade] on the "German Birdcage" east of Ploegsteert Wood fails with heavy casualties, many of which are caused by British heavy artillery firing short of target.

## **20 December 1914**

Local truce on the front of 22nd Brigade; Germans begin by taking in British wounded from no man's land. There is some contact: according to Lt G. Heinekey of 2nd Queen's, it lasted all morning. Lt Henry Bower, 1st South Staffordshire and at least one soldier of the 2nd Queen's were killed by rifle fire from neighbouring units while assisting with the wounded. A similar activity took place on the front of 20th Brigade.

## **23 December 1914**

A German soldier, Karl Aldag, reports that both sides had been heard singing hymns in the trenches. German troops coming into the lines bring Christmas trees. Some men begin to place them on the parapets of the fire trenches. Local truce on the front of 23rd Brigade.

## **24 December 1914, Christmas Eve**

The weather changes to a hard frost. This makes trench conditions a little more bearable. 98 British soldiers die on this day, many are victims of sniper fire.

A German aeroplane drops a bomb on Dover: the first air raid in British history. During the afternoon and early evening, British infantry are astonished to see many Christmas trees with candles and paper lanterns, on enemy parapets.

There is much singing of carols, hymns and popular songs, and a gradual exchange of communication and even meetings in some areas. Many of these meetings are to arrange collection of bodies. In other places, firing continues. Battalion officers are uncertain how to react; in general they maintain precautions.

The night brings a clear, still air with a hard frost. British and German troops fraternise at Christmas 1914

**AN HISTORIC GROUP: BRITISH AND GERMAN SOLDIERS PHOTOGRAPHED TOGETHER.**



Enemies become friendly on Christmas Day, when the British and Germans arranged an armistice, and were seen photographed together. This is the historic picture, and shows the soldiers

## 25 December 1914, Christmas Day

Men of 20th Brigade bury their dead of the attack of 18 December, alongside German soldiers engaged in the same activity. Christmas Day, 1914. Units behind the lines attend church services and have in most cases arranged Christmas dinners which are taken in barns and shattered buildings.

In the front lines, the fraternisation of Christmas Eve is continued throughout the day; not all units know about it, and it is not universal but is widespread over at least half of the British front. Many bodies that have been lying out in no man's land are buried, some in joint burials. Many men record the strange and wonderful events; many men exchange tokens or addresses with German soldiers, many of whom speak English.

81 British soldiers die on this day; a few die in areas that are otherwise peaceful and with fraternisation going on, victims of alert snipers. In other areas, there is considerable activity: 2nd Grenadier Guards suffer losses in a day of heavy fighting. As night fell, things grew quiet as men fell back to their trenches to take whatever Christmas meal that had been provided for them.

Some snow. In some areas, the friendly spirit was resumed. Gradually however, officers and men on both sides began to resume normal trench caution. The atmosphere in general remained relaxed as Brigade and Battalion officers took a pragmatic view of events. The chance was taken to carry out work that would otherwise have been hazardous. By now, however, news of the truce was reaching higher commands. General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien requested particulars of those units and officers who took part, with a view to disciplinary action. In the event, no action was taken against any unit or officer. 62 British soldiers die on this day.

## 27-31 December 1914

The weather turns wet again, with rain, sleet and storms. There were instances of men disappearing in the flooded trenches. Yet in some areas the friendly mood remained for several days and there was almost no firing, although open fraternisation gradually died away. On New Years Eve, there was a certain amount of singing and exchange of messages, but no truce as such.

## BBC Video on the Christmas 1914 Truce

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### British units which took part in the truce

#### Brigade

#### Unit

**5th Division** on Wulverghem – Messines road and in the River Douve valley

14th Brigade

1st [Devonshire](#)

1st [East Surrey](#)

2nd [Manchester](#)

15th Brigade

1/6th [Cheshire](#)

1st [Norfolk](#)

**4th Division** in front of Ploegsteert Wood

10th Brigade

1st [Royal Warwickshire](#)

2nd [Royal Dublin Fusiliers](#)

2nd [Seaforth Highlanders](#)

1st [Royal Irish Fusiliers](#)

11th Brigade

1st [Hampshire](#)

1st [Rifle Brigade](#)

1st [East Lancashire](#)

1/5th [London](#)  
(London Rifle  
Brigade)

12th Brigade

2nd [Lancashire Fusiliers](#)

2nd [Essex](#)

1/2nd  
[Monmouthshire](#)

XXXIII Bde [RFA](#)          135 Battery RFA

31 Heavy Battery  
[RGA](#)

**6th Division** at Frelinghien and Houplines

16th Brigade          1st [Leicestershire](#)

1st [Bufs \(East Kent\)](#)

17th Brigade          2nd [Leinster](#)

3rd [Rifle Brigade](#)

1/16th [London](#)  
(Queen's  
Westminster Rifles)

1st [North  
Staffordshire](#)

19th Brigade          2nd [Royal Welsh Fusiliers](#)

2nd [Argyll and  
Sutherland  
Highlanders](#)

1/5th [Cameronians  
\(Scottish Rifles\)](#)

XXXVIII Bde [RFA](#)          24 Battery RFA

XIII (H) Bde [RFA](#)          87 Battery RFA

**7th Division** at Bois Grenier, La Boutillerie and on the Fromelles road

20th Brigade          2nd [Border](#)

2nd [Gordon  
Highlanders](#)

1/6th [Gordon  
Highlanders](#)

2nd [Scots Guards](#)

21st Brigade          2nd [Wiltshire](#)

2nd [Bedfordshire](#)

2nd [Yorkshire](#)



22nd Brigade	2nd <a href="#">Queen's (Royal West Surrey)</a>
1/8th <a href="#">Royal Scots</a>	
XXIII Bde <a href="#">RFA</a>	104 Battery RFA
XIV Bde <a href="#">RFA</a>	F and T Batteries RHA
III Heavy Bde <a href="#">RGA</a>	111 and 112 Batteries RGA
A and B Squadrons, the <a href="#">Northumberland Hussars</a>	

### **8th Division** at Picantin, Fauquissart and Neuve Chapelle

23rd Brigade	2nd <a href="#">Devonshire</a>
2nd <a href="#">Cameronians (Scottish Rifles)</a>	
24th Brigade	2nd <a href="#">East Lancashire</a>
2nd <a href="#">Northamptonshire</a>	
25th Brigade	1/13th <a href="#">London</a> (Kensington)
1st <a href="#">Royal Irish Rifles</a> > <a href="#">War diary from Christmas 1914</a>	
XLV Bde <a href="#">RFA</a>	5 Battery RFA
2 Field Company, the <a href="#">Royal Engineers</a>	

### **Meerut Division** at Richebourg l'Avoué

Gharwal Brigade	1/39 Gharwal Rifles
2/39 Gharwal Rifles	
18th <a href="#">Hussars</a>	

Note: those units that were under command of the Divisions and Brigades shown but do not appear in the table did not take part in fraternisation, often because they were in billets and out of the front line at the time. The list has been compiled by reference to war diaries, soldiers letters, reports, etc.

## **German units which took part in the truce**

<b>Brigade</b>	<b>Unit</b>
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**6th Bavarian Reserve Division**, facing Kemmel

12th Bavarian Reserve Brigade      17th Bavarian Reserve Regiment

**40th Division**, facing Wulverghem and Ploegsteert Wood and at Frelinghien

48th Brigade      10th Infantry Regiment

88th Brigade      104th Infantry Regiment

6th Jaeger Battalion

89th Brigade      133rd Infantry Regiment Saxon

134th Infantry Regiment

**24th Division**, on the Armentieres-Lille railway

47th Brigade      179th Infantry Regiment

48th Brigade      107th Infantry Regiment

**13th Division**, at Fromelles and on Rue des Bois Blancs

25th Brigade      158th Infantry Regiment

13th Infantry Regiment

11th Jaeger Battalion

26th Brigade      55th Infantry Regiment

15th Infantry Regiment

**14th Division**, at Aubers and Festubert

27th Brigade      16th Infantry Regiment (3rd Westphalian)

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