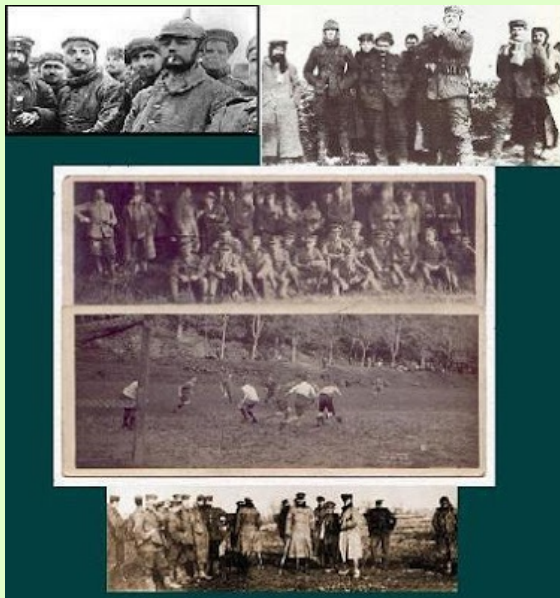


Tuesday, December 25, 2007

The Christmas Truce of 1914



One of the most remarkable and moving stories in the long, sad history of warfare is that of the Christmas Truce of 1914, which was a spontaneous expression of peace and good will between British and German soldiers in the trenches. Laying down their arms, they came together in no man's land to exchange gifts, sing Christmas carols, and even to play soccer.





British and German troops standing together on Christmas Day, 1914.

After looking into each others eyes, and seeing that they had far more in common with each other than with the bloodthirsty politicians and generals who had sent them to war, they had to be threatened with court martial by the powers that be to make them go back to the grim, insane business of killing each other - for what?

Here is the [snopes urban legends page](#) on this incredible story (which Snopes properly lists as "true" because it did indeed happen). And here is [another account](#):

The meeting of enemies as friends in no-man's land was experienced by hundreds, if not thousands, of men on the Western Front during Christmas 1914. Today, 90 years after it occurred, the event is seen as a shining episode of sanity from among the bloody chapters of World War One – a spontaneous effort by the lower ranks to create a peace that could have blossomed were it not for the interference of generals and politicians.

And here is an especially moving video and song dedicated to the men of the Christmas Truce, where the artist who wrote the song recounts how very, very old German veterans of the Christmas Truce came to hear him play and sing the song in Belgium. It is a real tear jerker.

A Carol from Flanders
by Frederick Niven (1878-1944)

In Flanders on the Christmas morn
The trenched foemen lay,
The German and the Briton born,
And it was Christmas Day.

The red sun rose on fields accurst,

The gray fog fled away;
But neither cared to fire the first,
For it was Christmas Day!

They called from each to each across
The hideous disarray,
For terrible has been their loss:
"Oh, this is Christmas Day!"

Their rifles all they set aside,
One impulse to obey;
'Twas just the men on either side,
Just men — and Christmas Day.

They dug the graves for all their dead
And over them did pray:
And Englishmen and Germans said:
"How strange a Christmas Day!"

Between the trenches then they met,
Shook hands, and e'en did play
At games on which their hearts were set
On happy Christmas Day.


Not all the emperors and kings,
Financiers and they
Who rule us could prevent these things —
For it was Christmas Day.

Oh ye who read this truthful rime
From Flanders, kneel and say:
God speed the time when every day
Shall be as Christmas Day.

No truer statement has been made than that of World War I Marine Major General [Smedley Butler](#) , one of the most highly decorated Marines in history (he won two Medals of Honor!) when he declared that "war is a racket."

War is a racket. It always has been. It is possibly the oldest, easily the most profitable, surely the most vicious. It is the only one international in scope. It is the only one in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives. A racket is best described, I believe, as something that is not what it seems to the majority of the people. Only a small 'inside' group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many. Out of war a few people make huge fortunes."

He was speaking from his experience in World War I, but his warning stands the test of time. As Major General Butler asked, who makes the profits? Who pays the bills? You know the answer. - Stewart

Posted by [Stewart Rhodes](#) at 1:24 AM 

[Newer Post](#)

[Home](#)

[Older Post](#)

Subscribe to: [Post Comments \(Atom\)](#)