

# WWI SILENT NIGHT

## CONFLICT

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## TREASON

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## THESIS

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## CONTEXT

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## COMPROMISE

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## FOOTBALL

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## LEGACY

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# THESIS

An unofficial ceasefire occurred along the Western Front on December 25, 1914, during World War I. Conflict of global massacre convinced German and British troops to mingle on Christmas, a treasonous compromise. Lasting effects include fear of war because of technology. Acknowledgment of humanity remains seeded in soldier's hearts.



Riflemen Andrew (middle) and Grigg (second from the right, background) of the London Rifle Brigade with troops of the 104th and 106th Saxon Regiments, Ploegsteert, Belgium, The Western Front, Christmas Day 1914.



Daily Mail Newspaper, "Christmas Truce at Front", December 31, 1914.

# CONTEXT

The Schlieffen Plan was the German offensive, "... Germany's troops attacking France through neutral Belgium and the descending on Paris from the north" (Murphy 15). France formed Plan XVII. These two clashing offensives led to the Battle of Mons, with Le Cateau following. "Fierce fighting continued, but no army seemed capable of driving back the enemy[...] the lines of battle seemed to hardly move at all" (Murphy 27). To prevent further casualties, both sides dug a trench system called The Western Front. "Two parallel trenches. From fifty to one thousand yards apart... a total of over 475 miles." (Murphy 29). Continued skirmishes amounted to ceasefire across this front.

Everything erupted when heir to the Austrian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was assassinated along with his pregnant wife in Sarajevo, Bosnia. The hitman being a member of The Black Hand, a Serbian radical terrorist organization, had Austria believe, "[...] the assassinations were part of a Serbian conspiracy to incite rebellion in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Murphy 8). The militarily superior Germans urged Austria to take action, and so the First World War began.

Ever since the 1800s, tensions grew in Europe. The Franco-Prussian War and growing nationalism with the Slavs set the stage for a global conflict (Gilbert 2-4). Two main alliances formed. The Triple Entente: France, Britain, and Russia, and the Triple Alliance: Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, divided Europe. "By 1914, Europe was an armed camp ready to explode" (Murphy 1).

# LEGACY

Today, monuments and historical newspapers document the proceedings of the truce. In the long term, war remains altered. A mutual truce is now unlikely.

"Soldiers became hardened to the brutality of the war. While there were occasional moments of peace throughout the rest of World War I, they never again came on the scale of the Christmas truce in 1914" (Bajekal).

This truce serves as a model for overcoming corrupted commands and unifying nations. The conflict of death and destruction can be stopped with a compromise of love and sympathy.

Global tensions with North Korea and the Middle East continue to rise. Humanity should be stressed. The truce's legacy exist in kindness and compassion. For example, Truman dropped nuclear warning leaflets to Japan. War isn't an excuse to kill. The Christmas Truce of 1914 reveals that love cripples politically propagated hate. Morales supercede authority, end of story.



National Memorial Arboretum, Arlesey, Staffordshire. "Christmas Truce"

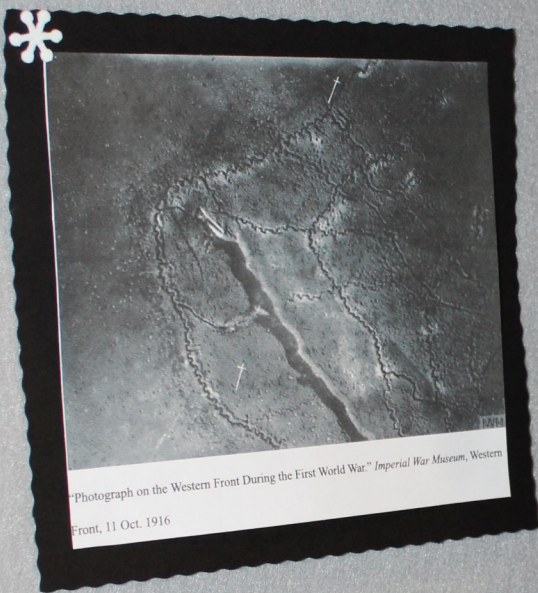


Statue by Andy Edwards, Liverpool, England, "Christmas Truce of 1914"

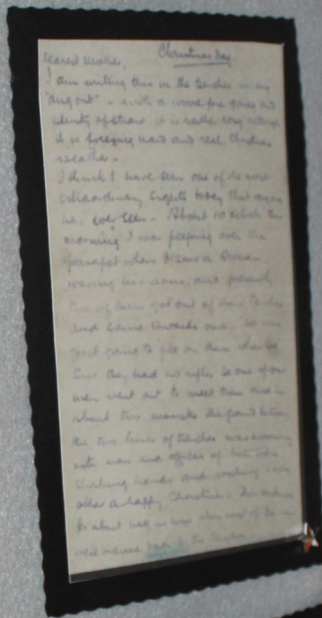


# CONFLICT

Early expectations, ruthless fighting, and evolution in warfare were major conflicts. The Western Front stalemate elongated the war. Spirits once high declined from severe losses and harsh climate of the winter. Developments of trench warfare, mounted machine guns, and artillery only lengthened the war and caused more deaths. Generals overlooked such aspects of the war. A compromise would be inevitable.



"Photograph on the Western Front During the First World War." Imperial War Museum, Western Front, 11 Oct. 1916



Alfred Douglas Chater: "Participation in the Christmas Truce" Western Front, December 1914, March 1915.



Christmas Day 1914. British and German troops meeting in No-Man's Land.

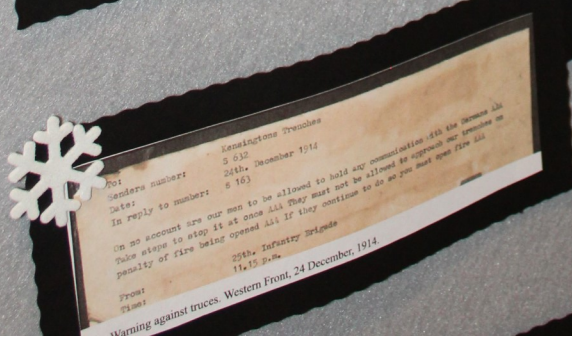


British and German troops meeting in No-Man's Land.

# TREASON

Officers rejected any request for truce. Generals believed men should be focused on war, not games. Without an end in sight, troops refused to obey.

"Their truce-the famous Christmas Truce-was unofficial and short. Many officers disapproved, and headquarters on both sides took strong steps to ensure that it could never happen again" (Dutch).

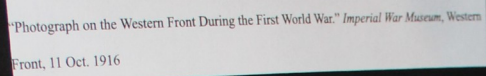


Warning against truces. Western Front, 24 December, 1914.



British and German troops meeting in No-Man's Land.





# TREASON

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Longhorns Tremmer  
 5 152  
 2025, December 1934  
 8 183  
 In reply to numbers  
 2535, January 1934  
 1425 2-6-36  
 Western Front, 24 December, 1918

"Such a thing should not happen in wartime. Have you no German sense of honor left?"

Alois Hitler (Klein)

morning I have been one of the most  
 extraordinary things, may that name  
 be, for ten. About 10 o'clock in  
 morning I was passing out the  
 principal when I was a woman  
 wearing her dress and probably  
 the only one of her kind  
 and came towards me. I was  
 just going to sit on them when  
 she said, "I refer some of your  
 work at it and then I will  
 about two weeks before  
 the first hour of the day was coming  
 into me and after of the day  
 thinking in the end making me  
 after a day, thinking in the end  
 to about was a very old and the  
 old man, but for me.

Alfred Douglas Chase, "Participation in the Christmas Tree" Boston Post, December 20, 1903.

"Their trace—the famous Christmas Tree—was neither visible, nor often disappointed, and headquarters in both sides took strong steps to ensure that it could never happen again" (Duck).



Strigade with troops of the 104th and 106th  
Front, Christmas Day 1914.



...from the 'Northumbrian' ...





# COMPROMISE

A compromise was brewing as fighting increased death, and dwindled motivation. The war grew stale. Troops were open to communication, reduced fighting, and eventually interaction. All across the Western Front, weapons ceased to fire. They left the trenches to exchange gifts, comfort, and stories. Such activities proceeded until New Years in some segments of the front.

## EXT

"We shook hands, wished each other a Merry Xmas and were soon conversing as if we had known each other for years. Here we were laughing and chatting to men whom only a few hours before we were trying to kill!"

British Corporal John Ferguson, Seaforth Highlanders (Klein).



The Illustrated London News Magazine, 9 January, 1915.

# FOOTBALL

More than just an exchanging of gifts, this ceasefire instigated a football match between the opposing sides.

"[...] Later a Scottish soldier appeared with a football which seemed to come from nowhere and a few minutes later a real football match got underway. The Scots marked their goal mouth with their strange caps and we did the same with ours. It was far from easy to play on the frozen ground, but we continued, keeping rigorously to the rules, despite the fact that it only lasted an hour and that we had no referee. A great many of the passes went wide, but all the amateur footballers, although they must have been very tired, played with huge enthusiasm"

Lieutenant Johannes Niemann, Saxon with the 133rd, 25 December, 1914 (Dash).



"Christmas Truce Reenactment", Ploegsteert, Belgium.



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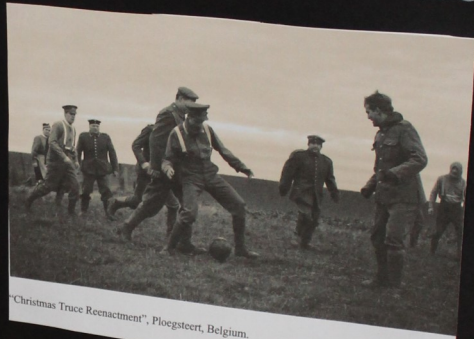
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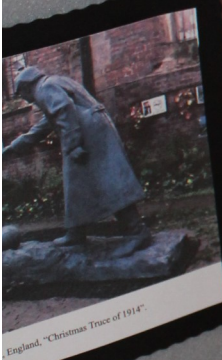
"Christmas Truce Reenactment", Ploegsteert, Belgium.



Football Match", Western Front, 25 December, 1914

"The ball appeared from somewhere, I don't know where, but it came from  
their side - it wasn't from our side that the ball came. They made up some goals  
and one fellow went in goal and then it was just a general kickabout. I should think  
there were about a couple of hundred taking part. I had a go at the ball. I was pretty  
good then, at 19. Everybody seemed to be enjoying themselves. There was no sort  
of ill-will between us. There was no referee, and no score, no tally at all. It was  
simply a melee - nothing like the soccer you see on television. The boots we wore  
were a menace - those great big boots we had on - and in those days the balls were  
made of leather and they soon got very soggy"

Ernie Williams, former Territorial of 6th Cheshires, UK TV interview, 1983  
(Chris).



England, "Christmas Truce of 1914".

