

Military Resistance 12L12

The Soldiers Truce: A Hidden History From The First World War



German and British soldiers fraternize – Christmas 1914

[Thanks to Dennis Serdel, Vietnam 1967-68 (one tour) Light Infantry, Americal Div. 11th Brigade, purple heart, Veterans For Peace 50 Michigan, Vietnam Veterans Against The War, United Auto Workers GM Retiree, in Perry, Michigan]

To many, the end of the war and the failure of the peace would validate the Christmas cease-fire as the only meaningful episode in the apocalypse.

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December 1, 2005 by John V. Denson, 2005 LewRockwell.com [Excerpts]

The Christmas Truce, which occurred primarily between the British and German soldiers along the Western Front in December 1914, is an event the official histories of the Great War leave out, and the Orwellian historians hide from the public.

Stanley Weintraub has broken through this barrier of silence and written a moving account of this significant event by compiling letters sent home from the front, as well as diaries of the soldiers involved. His book is entitled *Silent Night: The Story of the World War I Christmas Truce*. The book contains many pictures of the actual events showing the opposing forces mixing and celebrating together that first Christmas of the war.

This remarkable story begins to unfold, according to Weintraub, on the morning of December 19, 1914:

Lieutenant Geoffrey Heinekey, new to the 2ND Queen's Westminster Rifles, wrote to his mother, 'A most extraordinary thing happened. . . Some Germans came out and held up their hands and began to take in some of their wounded and so we ourselves immediately got out of our trenches and began bringing in our wounded also. The Germans then beckoned to us and a lot of us went over and talked to them and they helped us to bury our dead. This lasted the whole morning and I talked to several of them and I must say they seemed extraordinarily fine men It seemed too ironical for words. There, the night before we had been having a terrific battle and the morning after, there we were smoking their cigarettes and they smoking ours. (p. 5)

Weintraub reports that the French and Belgians reacted differently to the war and with more emotion than the British in the beginning. The war was occurring on their land and The French had lived in an atmosphere of *revanche* since 1870, when Alsace and Lorraine were seized by the Prussians in a war declared by the French. (p. 4).

The British and German soldiers, however, saw little meaning in the war as to them, and, after all, the British King and the German Kaiser were both grandsons of Queen Victoria. Why should the Germans and British be at war, or hating each other, because a royal couple from Austria were killed by an assassin while they were visiting in Serbia?

However, since August when the war started, hundreds of thousands of soldiers had been killed, wounded or missing by December 1914 (p. xvi).

It is estimated that over eighty thousand young Germans had gone to England before the war to be employed in such jobs as waiters, cooks, and cab drivers and many spoke English very well. It appears that the Germans were the instigators of this move towards a truce.

So much interchange had occurred across the lines by the time that Christmas Eve approached that Brigadier General G.T. Forrestier-Walker issued a directive forbidding fraternization:

For it discourages initiative in commanders, and destroys offensive spirit in all ranks . . . Friendly intercourse with the enemy, unofficial armistices and exchange

of tobacco and other comforts, however tempting and occasionally amusing they may be, are absolutely prohibited. (p. 6–7).

Later strict orders were issued that any fraternization would result in a court-martial.

Most of the seasoned German soldiers had been sent to the Russian front while the youthful and somewhat untrained Germans, who were recruited first, or quickly volunteered, were sent to the Western Front at the beginning of the war. Likewise, in England young men rushed to join in the war for the personal glory they thought they might achieve and many were afraid the war might end before they could get to the front. They had no idea this war would become one of attrition and conscription or that it would set the trend for the whole 20TH century, the bloodiest in history which became known as the War and Welfare Century.

As night fell on Christmas Eve the British soldiers noticed the Germans putting up small Christmas trees along with candles at the top of their trenches and many began to shout in English We no shoot if you no shoot.(p. 25).

The firing stopped along the many miles of the trenches and the British began to notice that the Germans were coming out of the trenches toward the British who responded by coming out to meet them.

They mixed and mingled in No Man's Land and soon began to exchange chocolates for cigars and various newspaper accounts of the war which contained the propaganda from their respective homelands.

Many of the officers on each side attempted to prevent the event from occurring but the soldiers ignored the risk of a court-martial or of being shot.

Some of the meetings reported in diaries were between Anglo-Saxons and German Saxons and the Germans joked that they should join together and fight the Prussians.

The massive amount of fraternization, or maybe just the Christmas spirit, deterred the officers from taking action and many of them began to go out into No Man's Land and exchange Christmas greetings with their opposing officers.

Each side helped bury their dead and remove the wounded so that by Christmas morning there was a large open area about as wide as the size of two football fields separating the opposing trenches.

The soldiers emerged again on Christmas morning and began singing Christmas carols, especially Silent Night. They recited the 23RD Psalm together and played soccer and football. Again, Christmas gifts were exchanged and meals were prepared openly and attended by the opposing forces.

Weintraub quotes one soldier's observation of the event: Never . . . was I so keenly aware of the insanity of war. (p. 33).

The first official British history of the war came out in 1926 which indicated that the Christmas Truce was a very insignificant matter with only a few people involved. However, Weintraub states:

During a House of Commons debate on March 31, 1930, Sir H. Kinglsey Wood, a Cabinet Minister during the next war, and a Major 'In the front trenches' at Christmas 1914, recalled that he 'took part in what was well known at the time as a truce. We went over in front of the trenches and shook hands with many of our German enemies. A great number of people (now) think we did something that was degrading.'

Refusing to presume that, he went on, 'The fact is that we did it, and I then came to the conclusion that I have held very firmly ever since, that if we had been left to ourselves there would never have been another shot fired. For a fortnight the truce went on. We were on the most friendly terms, and it was only the fact that we were being controlled by others that made it necessary for us to start trying to shoot one another again.'

He blamed the resumption of the war on 'the grip of the political system which was bad, and I and others who were there at the time determined there and then never to rest . . . Until we had seen whether we could change it.' But they could not. (p. 169–70)

Two soldiers, one British and one German, both experienced the horrors of the trench warfare in the Great War and both wrote moving accounts which challenged the idea of the glory of a sacrifice of the individual to the nation in an unnecessary or unjust war.

The British soldier, Wilfred Owen, wrote a famous poem before he was killed in the trenches seven days before the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

He tells of the horror of the gas warfare which killed many in the trenches and ends with the following lines:

***If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
Behind the wagon that we flung him in,
And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,
His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;
If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood
Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,
Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud
Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues – My friend, you would not tell with
such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.***

(The Latin phrase is translated roughly as It is sweet and honorable to die for one's country, a line from the Roman poet Horace used to produce patriotic zeal for ancient Roman wars.)

The German soldier was Erich M. Remarque who wrote one of the best anti-war novels of all time, entitled *All Quiet On The Western Front*, which was later made into an American movie that won the Academy Awards in 1929 as the Best Movie of the year.

He also attacked the idea of the nobility of dying for your country in a war and he describes the suffering in the trenches:

We see men living with their skulls blown open; We see soldiers run with their two feet cut off; They stagger on their splintered stumps into the next shell-hole; A lance corporal crawls a mile and half on his hands dragging his smashed knee after him; Another goes to the dressing station and over his clasped hands bulge his intestines; We see men without mouths, without jaws, without faces; We find one man who has held the artery of his arm in his teeth for two hours in order not to bleed to death.

I would imagine that the Christmas Truce probably inspired the English novelist and poet, Thomas Hardy, to write a poem about World War I entitled *The Man He Killed*, which reads as follows:

*Had he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!*

*But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.*

I shot him dead because – Because he was my foe,

*Just so: my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although*

*He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like – just as I – Was out of work – had sold his traps – No other reason
why.*

*Yes, quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.*

Many leaders of the British Empire saw the new nationalistic Germany (since 1870–71) as a threat to their world trade, especially with Germany's new navy.

The idea that economics played a major role in bringing on the war was confirmed by President Woodrow Wilson after the war in a speech wherein he gave his assessment of the real cause of the war. He was campaigning in St. Louis, Missouri

in September of 1919 trying to get the U.S. Senate to approve the Versailles Treaty and he stated:

Why, my fellow-citizens, is there (anyone) here who does not know that the seed of war in the modern world is industrial and commercial rivalry? . . . This war, in its inception, was a commercial and industrial war. It was not a political war.

Weintraub alludes to a play by William Douglas Home entitled A Christmas Truce wherein he has characters representing British and German soldiers who just finished a soccer game in No Man's Land on Christmas day and engaged in a conversation which very well could represent the feelings of the soldiers on that day.

The German lieutenant concedes the impossibility of the war ending as the soccer game had just done, with no bad consequences – Because the Kaiser and the generals and the politicians in my country order us that we fight.

So do ours, agrees Andrew Wilson (the British soldier)

Then what can we do?

The answer's 'nothing.' But if we do nothing . . . like we're doing now, and go on doing it, there'll be nothing they can do but send us home.

Or shoot us. (p. 110)

The Great War killed over ten million soldiers and Weintraub states, Following the final Armistice came an imposed peace in 1919 that created new instabilities ensuring another war, (p. 174). This next war killed more than fifty million people, over half of which were civilians. Weintraub writes:

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He concludes his remarkable book with the following:

A celebration of the human spirit, the Christmas Truce remains a moving manifestation of the absurdities of war. A very minor Scottish poet of Great War vintage, Frederick Niven, may have got it right in his 'A Carol from Flanders,' which closed,

*O ye who read this truthful rime
From Flanders, kneel and say:
God speed the time when every day
Shall be as Christmas Day. (p. 175)*

MORE:

British And German Soldiers Arm-In-Arm



The Illustrated London News of January 9, 1915 [Thanks to June VI, who sent this in.]

BRITISH AND GERMAN SOLDIERS ARM-IN-ARM AND EXCHANGING HEADGEAR: A CHRISTMAS TRUCE BETWEEN OPPOSING TRENCHES.
DRAWN BY A. C. MICHAEL

SAXONS AND ANGLO-SAXONS FRATERNISING ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE AT THE SEASON OF PEACE AND GOODWILL: OFFICERS AND MEN FROM THE GERMAN AND BRITISH TRENCHES MEET AND GREET ONE ANOTHER - A GERMAN OFFICER PHOTOGRAPHING A GROUP OF FOES AND FRIENDS.

The spirit of Christmas made itself felt in at least one section of the trenches at the front, where British and German soldiers fraternised, and for a brief while, during an informal and spontaneous truce, there was peace on earth and goodwill towards men among those who a few hours before had been seeking each other's blood, and where bound to do so again after the truce was over.

The part of the British lines where these incongruous scenes occurred, was, it is said, at a point where the enemy's trenches, only about eighty yards away, were occupied by a Saxon regiment. Further along the line, where Prussian troops were said to be stationed, there was a certain amount of fighting.

It was apparently towards the British left that the friendly truce was observed, while officers and men from both sides left their trenches and met in No Man's Land between, where, as a rule, no man dares to show so much as the top of his head.

British and Germans met and shook hands, exchanged cigars and cigarettes, newspapers and addresses, and wished each other the compliments of the season, conversing as far as possible with the aid, as interpreter, of a German soldier who had lived in America.

A group of British and German soldiers, arm-in-arm, some of whom had exchanged head-gear, were photographed by a German officer.

The figure on the extreme left in our drawing, for instance, is a German soldier in a British service-cap, while the fourth figure from the left is a British soldier in his goat-skin coat wearing a Pickelhaube, or German helmet.

Some of the British, it is said visited the German trenches and an Anglo-German football match was even played. The dead who lay in front of the trenches were buried, and a party of German brought back the body of a British officer.- [Drawing Copyrighted in United States and Canada.]



German and Russian soldiers fraternize on the Eastern Front

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

**Taliban Overrun Khamyab
District On Turkmen Border:
“I Had No Support”
“The Government Force Did Not Stay,
So I Had To Retreat”**

“The Number Of Taliban Has Increased And They Now Set The Rules In The Area”

December 21, 2014 RFE/RL. By Bruce Pannier, with contributions from Azatlyk Director Muhammad Tahir and Azatlyk correspondent Sahra Ghulam Nabi. Special thanks to the correspondents in Jowzjan, Faryab, Baghdis, and Herat provinces, who are bringing this information to the world

The Taliban has overrun Afghanistan’s Khamyab District and is now Turkmenistan’s immediate neighbor.

Turkmenistan’s border runs along the western, northwestern, and northeastern sides of Khamyab. Turkmenistan’s border guards and security forces have been building walls, digging ditches, and establishing new border posts across the border from Khamyab since early October.

RFE/RL’s Turkmen Service, known locally as Azatlyk, spoke with Fakir Muhammad Jowzjani, the chief of police for Jowzjan Province where the Khamyab District is located.

Jowzjani said, “Our soldiers went there to take on the Taliban in Khamyab. There was fighting against the Taliban, but our forces were compelled to withdraw. When the soldiers were returning to (the provincial capital) Sheberghan, they came across the Taliban, who were waiting for them, and the soldiers came under attack again.”

Jowzjani said the district counterterrorism chief and two other soldiers were killed in the ambush.

Gaffar, the commander of the local Arbaky force, the civil militia, said his forces also had to retreat from the district.

“The security forces came to Khamyab and we joined them and advanced on several villages.

“We faced resistance and the soldiers withdrew,” commander Gaffar said.

“I did also at the suggestion of the security forces and now I’m in Sheberghan.”

Gaffar told Azatlyk he had taken all his fighters with him, effectively leaving the district to the Taliban.

Gaffar said the Taliban had brought up extra fighters from the Akcha district for the assault on Khamyab.

“I had no support,” Gaffar said. “The government force did not stay, so I had to retreat.”

Another Arbaky commander, Gurbandurdy, who has featured in several "Qishloq Ovozi" reports, confirmed Khamyab has fallen. Gurbandurdy, an ethnic Turkmen, commands the Arbaky force in Qarqeen district, which borders Khamyab.

Gurbandurdy said, "The situation in Khamyab has seriously deteriorated. The number of Taliban has increased and they now set the rules in the area."

And those rules are all too familiar.

One woman, whose name we will not reveal, recounted her story to Azatlyk. This woman was a doctor at a hospital in Khamyab until the Taliban started taking villages in the district. She started receiving phone calls.

"We are the Taliban," the callers said, then warned her that they did not want female doctors at the hospital.

The callers said she could stay in Khamyab district but that she was not to practice medicine. She fled to Mazar-e Sharif.

A schoolteacher still in the district said he also received phone calls from people identifying themselves as the Taliban. These callers told him the local school principal, who was a woman, had to quit and that all female teachers had to, as well.

The outlying villages in Khamyab are so close to Turkmenistan's border that border guards from the neighboring country would cross into Khamyab to buy cucumbers and tomatoes.

Khamyab is not the only trouble spot by Turkmenistan's border.

To the west of Jowzjan, in Faryab Province, violence continues in Qaysar district. A local Arbaky chief, "Boby Commander," said Taliban militants captured the village of Shor in November.

The governor of Faryab Province, Mahmadulla Vatas, told Azatlyk in August that the Taliban was more active and more numerous in his province recently. But Vatas said many of those in the ranks of the Taliban in Faryab were Chechens and members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

Emphasizing the precarious situation in Faryab, the provincial intelligence chief was assassinated, most believe by the Taliban, shortly after Vatas spoke to Azatlyk.

Turkmenistan's government has done very little, and at times almost nothing, to counter this growing security problem south of its border, despite having three border guards and three soldiers killed along the Afghan frontier this year, the most recorded since 1991 independence. The attempt by Turkmenistan's authorities to court better ties with neighboring areas in Afghanistan, home to mainly ethnic Turkmen, was short lived and by early autumn the government seems to have settled on defensive barriers and fortified posts to contain Afghanistan's problems.

The result is that, for the first time since late 2001, the Taliban is Turkmenistan's neighbor again, at least in Khamyab district.

MILITARY NEWS

Oath Keepers Intervene In Ferguson: “Made Up Of Current And Former Members Of The Military, Law Enforcement And Fire Departments And Other First Responders From Around The Country” ‘We’re Not Here To Hurt You. We Love You, And We’re Here To Protect You From The Police”

December 14, 2014 by Brian Heffernan, Al Jazeera America

FERGUSON, Mo. — Two days after mass protests swept Ferguson, with looters smashing through the glass storefront of the dentistry that 59-year-old Marilyn Crider manages, she arrived early to the office on Nov. 26 and was greeted by a pair of unexpected guests.

They wore military fatigues and had two rifles leaning against the wall next to them. “I think they said something like, ‘And you are?’ and I said, ‘I work here. Who are you?’” Crider said.

The men called themselves Oath Keepers and said one of the dentists had given them a key. They had been guarding the building the night before.

Since Nov. 25, members of the group — many of them armed — have been patrolling rooftops and sidewalks in the St. Louis suburb.

Oath Keepers, regarded by some as a militia — although they reject that characterization — is made up of current and former members of the military, law enforcement and fire departments and other first responders from around the country.

It has billed itself locally as a volunteer security force bent on protecting small businesses, residents and the rights of peaceful protesters in the wake of violence after a grand jury decision not to indict police officer Darren Wilson for the Aug. 9 shooting of unarmed black teen Michael Brown.

The group says there are about 35,000 members nationwide.

The Southern Poverty Law Center, an organization that tracks extremist and hate groups in the U.S., listed the Oath Keepers as an active “patriot” group in 2013.

Ryan Lenz, senior writer for the center, says Oath Keepers is an anti-government group but not a hate group.

It is largely motivated by fears that an overzealous government will disregard the U.S. Constitution and strip citizens’ rights, he said.

The groups’ website says members have taken oaths to “support and defend the constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic, so help us God.”

Before Ferguson, the group popped up in April in Nevada at an armed standoff between Cliven Bundy and Bureau of Land Management rangers, who, acting on a court order, attempted to seize 500 cattle that Bundy owned and had been allowing to graze on public land. The rangers, facing the Oath Keepers and militiamen belonging to several other groups, eventually backed down.

Lenz said that arriving in Ferguson to provide security for businesses seems like “a really weird mission” for the Oath Keepers to inject themselves into, with racial, social and cultural tensions so high.

“It’s the kind of situation where a heavily armed ‘patriot’ group with anti-government perspectives on things who are standing on rooftops are obviously going to scare people or at least throw up some red flags,” Lenz said, adding that he couldn’t think of other “patriot” groups in recent history who have inserted themselves into situations of racial and civil unrest as Oath Keepers has in Ferguson.

In a Mother Jones magazine article, Justine Sharrock said the group is difficult to broadly characterize: “In the months I’ve spent getting to know the Oath Keepers, I’ve toggled between viewing them either as potentially dangerous conspiracy theorists or as crafty intellectuals with the savvy to rally politicians to their side. The answer, I came to realize, is that they cover the whole spectrum.”

The Oath Keepers’ presence has centered on a pair of buildings two blocks from the Ferguson police station on South Florissant Road. The group’s sudden visibility drew suspicion from many, support from others and ire from police, who ordered the group down from rooftops on Nov. 29 — orders the Oath Keepers defied on subsequent nights.

It was on this street where protests turned violent two weeks earlier, after the St. Louis County grand jury decision. After the announcement, looters ransacked dozens of storefronts, and arsonists torched several cars and nearly 10 buildings in Ferguson and the neighboring city of Dellwood.

The destruction left some residents and business owners wondering why the National Guard, which Gov. Jay Nixon had called in nearly a week earlier, had not been there to protect their businesses.

“I think it’s wonderful that (the Oath Keepers) were here, because, obviously, the National Guard is not going to stand on top of our building protecting us.” Crider said.

“I manage this building as well as the dental practice and we have tenants that live upstairs ... They could actually go to sleep at night and not wonder, ‘Is my building going to be caught on fire tonight?’”

Local Oath Keepers leader Sam Andrews said he woke to his wife watching the news the morning after the destruction and saw business owners lamenting their tattered and burned storefronts. “I’m from St. Louis and a small businessman, so that hit me right in the heart,” said Andrews, a former U.S. Department of Defense contractor who now works as a weapons engineer in the St. Louis area.

“We bought some plywood with our own money, and we came up here with screws and a team of guys and ladders, and we boarded up all these windows,” he said. “And we talked to each owner and said if ... everyone agrees, we will put a team of people together and come defend your business for you so this doesn’t happen again.”

They took to the rooftops that night wearing fatigues and carrying military-grade rifles. They were also equipped with buckets of water and fire extinguishers, which Andrews said were used to put out a flarelike incendiary device and Molotov cocktail that were lobbed onto the roofs during those first nights they stood guard.

Andrews said business owners from “all over the community” have asked the Oath Keepers to guard their businesses as well because Nixon and St. Louis County Police Chief Jon Belmar “have failed them so dramatically.”

“There’s no trust between Nixon and the people, and there’s no trust between Belmar and the people,” Andrews said. “And we’re basically here to fill that gap until that trust can be re-established.”

According to The St. Louis Post-Dispatch, police questioned the group that week and allowed them to stay at their posts until Nov. 29, when officers ordered the group down from the roofs.

Threatened with arrest for violating a county ordinance that requires private security guards to be licensed, the Oath Keepers temporarily left their positions but returned the next day and days thereafter, contending the rule doesn’t apply to them as volunteers.

A request to interview Belmar about the Oath Keepers was declined. A police spokesman said in an email that the Oath Keepers are required to follow the orders of

officers but did not explicitly say whether the department would tell the group the leave again.

Protesters quickly noticed the presence of the armed men on rooftops, and suspicions circulated about their identity. Some protesters heard rumors that they were members of the Ku Klux Klan.

Teshambra Newell, 29, who runs a photography studio across the street from buildings the Oath Keepers have been guarding, said this week that he still isn't sure who they are but doesn't feel comfortable with "militia" groups lurking behind buildings. "I keep my distance," he said.

Andrews recoils at the organization's being labeled a militia.

"The fact is the Oath Keepers is simply a group of people of all races, of all financial situations, all political persuasions that believe, as a group, that our country should follow our written laws," he says. "We're not a militia, and we're not right-wing radicals.

Nor is the group racially motivated, according to E. Stewart Rhodes, a Yale Law School graduate and former Ron Paul staffer who founded the 35,000-member group in 2009.

"I'm a quarter Mexican, so it's kind of hard for me to be a white supremacist," Rhodes told Al Jazeera in an interview earlier this month.

"And we have black members, and we're guarding a black lady's bakery ... So why would we do that if we're some kind of racist organization?"

On Saturday morning, Andrews stopped into the bakery that Rhodes mentioned, Natalie's Cakes and More, to speak with owner Natalie Dubose about the group's plan for a protest scheduled later that afternoon in front of the police station. When she walked from the kitchen in her apron, the two greeted each other warmly.

Andrews told her he would have a small, unarmed presence in front of the building and more men "in plainclothes out in the street, shaking hands, waving to people ... tell(ing) them we love them and support their right to protest."

"Awesome," Dubose said. "Everyone on the Twitter and Facebook page, they're loving that you guys are here. You're getting much love from everywhere."

Outside, Andrews said the group began changing its strategy a few days into the operation to appear less intimidating and militarized.

"What the men want is respect. What the women want is love. And when you come up to people on the street and you tell them 'I respect you, and I respect your right to protest,' they get tears in their eyes.

And when you tell the women, 'We're not here to hurt you. We love you, and we're here to protect you from the police,' they start crying. It's a stunning reaction — not something I expected."

Now more than two weeks after the Oath Keepers first took to the roofs, they rarely wear fatigues, carry rifles or take high-ground positions. Rooftop posts have been replaced with less frequent drive-by security patrols, Andrews said.

One evening last week, Andrews and another volunteer — an Illinois resident who declined to give his name — stood at an intersection on South Florissant near the bakery and waved to passing motorists. When cars stopped for a red light, he and Andrews would introduce the Oath Keepers to the drivers and hand them a prayer sheet. Many said they were glad to see the group there.

“Just knowing that the building is being watched makes me feel safer,” said Elena Vo, 18, while leaning on the register counter at her family’s restaurant, New Chinese Gourmet, which is in one of the buildings the Oath Keepers have been guarding.

On the night of the grand jury announcement, she sat up watching the local news and watched as a fire raged in the restaurant parking lot. Cameras showed one of the windows busted open. Looters had stolen the register and damaged a TV and several statues inside.

“I can go to bed at night just thinking I know my business is under watch right now. I don’t need to worry 24/7,” said Vo. A large burgundy Buddha sat next to her on the counter, its recent cracks mended with glue.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS



“At a time like this, scorching irony, not convincing argument, is needed. Oh had I the ability, and could reach the nation’s ear, I would, pour out a fiery stream of biting ridicule, blasting reproach, withering sarcasm, and stern rebuke.

“For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower, but thunder.

“We need the storm, the whirlwind, and the earthquake.”

“The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppose.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.

-- Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach"

“A Major Gain For The Cuban People”

“A New Political Landscape Will Emerge Where Left-Wing Opposition Political Action May Resurface And Give Strength To The Nascent Critical Left In Cuba”

“That Cuba Will Be Free From The Grasp Of US Imperialism, Even If The Economic Blockade Comes To An End, Is Not Likely”

“Advocating For The Democratic Self-Management Of Cuban Society That Can Shape A Compelling Resistance To The

Economic Liberalization That Is Likely To Come To The Island”



12.22.14 by Samuel Farber, Jacobin

Samuel Farber was born and raised in Cuba. He is the author of *Cuba Since the Revolution of 1959: A Critical Assessment*.

In December 17, 2014, Washington and Havana agreed to a pathbreaking change in a relationship that, for more than fifty years, was characterized by the United States’ efforts to overthrow the Cuban government, including the sponsorship of invasions, naval blockades, economic sabotage, assassination attempts, and terrorist attacks.

The new accord set free the remaining three members of the “Cuban Five” group held in US prisons since 1998 and, in exchange, Cuba freed the American Alan Gross and Rolando Sarraf Trujillo, a previously unknown US intelligence agent imprisoned on the island for almost twenty years, in addition to over fifty Cuban political prisoners.

Far more consequential are the resumption of official diplomatic relations and the significant relaxation of travel restrictions and remittances to Cuba.

The agreement covers the political normalization but not the full economic normalization of relations: that would require Congress repealing the Helms-Burton Act, signed into law by President Clinton in 1996.

There were previous efforts to resume political and economic relations between the two countries since the United States broke ties in early 1961. The most important was undertaken by the Carter administration, which in pursuing an initiative originally undertaken by Nixon, renewed secret negotiations with the Cuban government in 1977, when the Cuban exile right-wing in South Florida was still a negligible political force.

The two countries made mutual concessions that included the establishment of diplomatic “interest sections” in Washington and Havana and the lifting of the ban on tourist travel to the island, a restriction later reinstated by Reagan in 1982. In the wake of the Carter-Castro negotiations, the Cuban leader released most political prisoners, of which about 1,000 left for the United States, and in 1979, Cuban-Americans were, for the first time, allowed to visit their relatives on the island.

Yet the reconciliation process came to a halt.

While the presence of US troops throughout the world was taken for granted by Washington as an imperial entitlement, the deployment of Cuban forces in Africa became an obstacle to the normalization of relations.

Many in the US blamed Castro’s foreign involvement as the decisive reason for the collapse of the talks both under Nixon and Carter.

But there were other more important factors at work.

For one thing, the Carter administration was itself divided on the question. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance supported the resumption of normal relations with Cuba, while Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s powerful national security adviser, opposed the move.

But it was domestic political developments in the US unrelated to Cuba, that ultimately stopped the process.

The American right was becoming agitated over the negotiations concerning the transfer of the Panama Canal back to the Panamanians. In September 1977, Carter suspended negotiations with Cuba until after the Canal treaties were ratified by the Senate.

The suspension turned out to be indefinite.

Faced with attack over Panama, the Carter administration decided to shore up its right flank by adopting a tougher posture on Cuba, a stance that was shortly after reinforced by the victory of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, and by the political weakening of the Carter administration as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian hostage crisis.

“The American Capitalist Class Has Come To Support Not Only The Reestablishment Of Diplomatic Relations, But Even More So The Elimination Of The Economic Blockade”

Why did Obama succeed where previous US administrations failed?

More than anything else, the end of the Cold War, the departure of Cuban troops from Africa, and the less militant stance of Cuba in Latin America have, through the years, qualitatively downgraded the importance of Cuba in American foreign policy, as witnessed by the fact that practically all US government strategic studies in the last two decades don’t even mention the island.

At the same time, however, the American capitalist class, except for its most right-wing fringe, has come to support not only the reestablishment of diplomatic relations, but even more so the elimination of the economic blockade.

This has been the position adopted by the US Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers in the last several years, and also the general stance taken by the business press.

Business columnists have been arguing, with more than a grain of truth, that massive American investment and trade with the island would “subvert” and eventually overcome the Communist economic system, as has been happening in China and Vietnam.

Moreover, after exemptions to the US economic blockade allowing the export of agricultural goods and certain processed goods to Cuba were authorized by the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, firms such as Cargill, Archer Daniel Midland and Tyson Foods got involved in trade with Cuba.

After the current December 17 agreement, other corporations, such as Caterpillar and Pepsico joined in supporting it.

During the last several years, dozens of business people and politicians, particularly from the South, Midwest and Southwest have been visiting the island and discussing with the Cuban government future economic prospects especially if the blockade is repealed.

Reflecting the attitude of their business constituents, many Democratic and Republican politicians, such as Arizona Senator Jeff Flake, have been advocating political and economic relations with Cuba.

It remains to be seen whether these forces will be strong enough to amend, if not repeal, the Helms-Burton Act and allow for a full normalization of economic, as well as political, relations with the island.

“A Majority Of The Cubans And Cuban-Americans Residing In Florida Favor A Change In Policy Leading To Full Relations With The Island”

The exile community is changing

As the Cuba issue lost importance after the end of the Cold War, and as major business sectors have begun to favor economic and political relations with the country, the right-wing leadership of the Cuban exile enclave in South Florida remains the only political force firmly defending the blockade. Its political clout was particularly important in a closely divided state like Florida, where Cuban-Americans account for around 5 percent of the electorate.

But the conservative exile generation of the sixties has been dying out and by now the growing majority of the Cubans residing in Florida came to the United States since the eighties. In contrast with the older exiles, many of these people regularly visit the island

and are more concerned with the welfare of their Cuban relatives than with Cuban exile politics.

It is no wonder then that public opinion polls have shown that a majority of the Cubans and Cuban-Americans residing in Florida favor a change in policy leading to full relations with the island.

Nevertheless, many of these people are not yet citizens and affluent, conservative Cubans still have great power over the media and political system. The three Florida representatives in Congress of Cuban origin are still right-wing Republicans strongly committed to the blockade.

And yet the fact that Barack Obama won 48 percent of the Cuban vote (and larger proportions among younger Cubans) in the 2012 elections is a clear indication of the political trends among Cuban-Americans away from right-wing positions on Cuba.

Moreover, as the Cuban-American sociologist Alex Portes has indicated, the Cubans who have arrived since 1980 generally come from modest class backgrounds in the island and are hardly distinguishable from other Latin American immigrants in socio-economic terms. One wonders about the future of the Latin American “model minority.”

“A State-Capitalism That Retains The Monopoly Of Political Power Through The Communist Party, And That Controls The Strategic Sectors Of The Economy”

For its part, the Cuban government has been intent to find a way to resume diplomatic relations with the United States even though this may in the long run undermine its legitimacy, as it won't be able to blame the blockade for continuing political repression and economic woes.

Ever since Raúl Castro assumed power — informally in 2006 and formally in 2008 — he has been moving towards adopting the Sino-Vietnamese model, meaning a state-capitalism that retains the monopoly of political power through the Communist Party, and that controls the strategic sectors of the economy, such as banking, while sharing the rest with a domestic and foreign private sector.

But this has been a contradictory road where the Cuban government has tried to “have its cake and eat it too,” accompanying every economic change with restrictions that limit their effectiveness.

Despite the rosy picture drawn by Castro sympathizers, such as Emily Morris in *New Left Review*, the results of the Cuban government's new policies have been meager and unable to finally overcome the long economic crisis that has gripped the island since the Soviet Union's collapse.

The real wages of state employees, who still constitute the great majority of the labor force, had only reached, in 2013, 27 percent of their 1989 levels.

Since 2008, spending on education, health, social welfare and housing have diminished as a proportion of the state budget and gross domestic product.

Furthermore, for the last several years economic growth has been low (1.2 percent in 2014) and capital investment has been a meager 10 percent of the GDP compared with the average 20 percent for Latin America as a whole.

Not surprisingly, Marino Murillo, Cuba's Minister of the Economy, has said that the island needs at least 2 billion dollars a year in investment to achieve an economic takeoff.

This is the key to Castro's willingness to resume relations with the United States, especially in the light of the serious political and economic problems that Venezuela (Cuba's principal ally) and Russia are currently facing along with the relative decline in growth of the Chinese economy.

Castro has nothing to lose, since even if the Helms-Burton law is not amended or repealed, the Cuban economy is bound to benefit by the liberalization of travel and remittances recently decreed by Obama.

For the Cuban leader, any benefit he obtains from the agreement may be the lever he needs to vanquish the resistance in his own bureaucratic apparatus to the full implementation of the Sino-Vietnamese model in the island.

For his part, Obama must surely be conscious of the opportunity to reassert American political influence and its economic power in Cuba, aside from other real political benefits to be gained by this new agreement in Latin America and the rest of the Global South.

“Advocating For The Democratic Self-Management Of Cuban Society Can Shape A Compelling Resistance To The Economic Liberalization That Is Likely To Come To The Island”

Independently of the considerations that led the governments of Cuba and the United States to reach this agreement, it is a major gain for the Cuban people.

First, because it acknowledges that the imperial power of the US was not able to coerce the imposition of its socio-economic and political system, handing a victory for the principle of national self-determination. It is up to Cubans and Cubans alone to decide the destiny of their country.

Second, because in practical terms, it can improve the standard of living of Cubans and help to liberalize, although not necessarily democratize, the conditions of their political oppression and economic exploitation, making it easier to organize and act to defend their interests in an autonomous fashion against both the state and the new capitalists.

This has been the case of China, where thousands of protests occur every year to protect the standard of living and rights of the mass of the population in spite of the persistence of the one-party state.

Contrary to what many liberals thought right after the Cuban Revolution, the issue was never whether the end of the blockade would lead the Castro brothers to become more democratic.

That possibility was never and is not in the cards, except for those who believe that the establishment of Cuban Communism was merely a reaction to American imperialism instead of what Che Guevara admitted was half the outcome of imperialist constraint and half the outcome of the Cuban leaders choice.

What is real is the likelihood that the end of the blockade will undermine the support for the Castro government thereby facilitating the resistance and political formulation of alternatives to its rule.

That Cuba will be free from the grasp of US imperialism, even if the economic blockade comes to an end, is not likely.

The more “normal” imperialist power broadly experienced in the Global South will replace the more coercive and criminal one of the blockade era, especially if a successful alliance develops between American capital and the native state capitalists of the emerging Sino-Vietnamese model, as it happened in China and Vietnam.

Even at the purely political level, there are many conflicts that are clearly foreseeable, like, for example, one that was left unmentioned in the Obama-Castro agreement involving the return of revolutionary exiles, such as Assata Shakur, to prison in the United States.

With the passing of the historic generation of revolutionary leaders within the next decade, a new political landscape will emerge where left-wing opposition political action may resurface and give strength to the nascent critical left in Cuba.

Some may argue that since socialism of a democratic and revolutionary orientation is not likely to be on the immediate agenda, there is no point to put forward such a perspective.

But it is this political vision advocating for the democratic self-management of Cuban society that can shape a compelling resistance to the economic liberalization that is likely to come to the island.

By invoking solidarity with the most vulnerable, and calling for class, racial and gender equality, a movement can build unity against both the old and the emerging oppression.

Army-Navy Game Prepares West Pointers For Similar Battlefield Results:

“An Experiment To Build Officer Resiliency For The Military’s Next Impossible War”



December 13, 2014 by Frederick Taub, The Duffle Blog

BALTIMORE, Md. — The Army-Navy Game has provided critical insight into the effort it takes to fight futilely for an unattainable victory to future Army second lieutenants for more than a decade, and that’s all a part of the plan, Duffel Blog has learned.

The Army’s record-breaking 12-game losing streak against the Naval Academy is actually an experiment to build officer resiliency for the military’s next impossible war, according to one senior West Point official.

“We’re going to win this time!” U.S. Army Chief of Staff Gen. Raymond T. Odierno is expected to exclaim to a crowd of crestfallen cadets in the locker room of M&T Bank Stadium, unconsciously echoing both William Westmoreland in 1971 and Secretary of Defense Charles Hagel last Friday. “It’s a mathematical certainty! After losing 12 times in a row, it’s lucky number 13 for us this year!”

Gen. Odierno will fail to mention that he had made identical statements in years previous regarding the lucky numbers “3,” “5,” “6,” “7,” “10,” “11” and “12.”

“I wish he wouldn’t say ‘us’ when referring to the Army Football Team,” grumbled fourth-year cadet Robert Maymeister while eavesdropping on the locker room pep talk.

“These asshats do not represent me. If this were a competition between any other teams the NCAA would have stopped it by now for sanctioning domestic violence. Now the mission creep has gotten so bad that we have to ride an all-night bus ride to be in Baltimore by 0400 to practice the march-on.”

“Look at this way,” a leaked document of Gen. Odierno’s prepared remarks reveal. “Even at 0-12, we’ve still beaten Navy more recently than we’ve beaten any of America’s actual enemies! And we got new uniforms this year for you, just like last year and the year before that! U-S-A! U-S-A!”

Sources report that the Army Football Team has a 3rd Quarter exit strategy to hand over control of the ball to the Afghan National Football Team, which is expected to immediately defect.

DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE MILITARY?

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ANNIVERSARIES

December 23, 1961: Hideous Anniversary: The First KIA In A Previous Deadly Stupid Imperial Disaster



December 23, 1961

Carl Bunin Peace History December 20-26

James Davis of Livingston, Tennessee, was killed by the Viet Cong, the insurgents in South Vietnam, and became the first of some 58,000 U.S. soldiers killed during the Vietnam War.

Lyndon Johnson later referred to him as “the first American to fall in defense of our freedom in Vietnam.”

Over two million Vietnamese would die before the end of the war.

CLASS WAR REPORTS

“Two LAPD Bicycle Officers Shot Dead A Still-Unidentified Man” “Threatening Them With What, According To Conflicting Eyewitness

Accounts, May Have Been A Pocket Knife, A Fake Stage Knife, Or No Knife At All”

“The LAPD's Needless Killing Of A Young White Street Performer Shows That This System Will Direct Its Murderous Violence Against All Manner Of Impoverished And Marginalized People”



Protesting police murder in Los Angeles

December 16, 2014 by Randy Childs, Socialist Worker

Since the decision not to indict the cops who killed Mike Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, and Eric Garner in New York City, protesters have taken to the streets across the country to express their outrage and demand justice--and Los Angeles is no exception.

In LA, the intersection of Hollywood and Highland has become a frequent gathering place for Angelenos organizing Ferguson-inspired protests against police violence, partly because the famous tourist area is easily accessible by public transportation.

But it took on greater symbolic importance for the movement on December 5 when two LAPD bicycle officers shot dead a still-unidentified man here for allegedly threatening them with what, according to conflicting eyewitness accounts, may have been a pocket knife, a fake stage knife, or no knife at all.

Hollywood and Highland is populated by a large number of struggling street performers, many of whom dress as famous movie characters to pose for pictures with tourists, in exchange for tips.

Some area regulars knew the man killed by LAPD as a street performer named "J," who often dressed in the ghost costume popularized by the Scream horror movies and posed for pictures with tourists while brandishing a stage knife for dramatic effect.

Eyewitnesses and police say that J was not dressed in costume when he was killed.

While withholding the identities of the two officers and the deceased "suspect" for over a week, the LAPD didn't hesitate to publicize, via its official Twitter account, a photograph of a pocketknife, similar to a Swiss Army knife, that was supposedly found at the scene of the shooting.

The police also reported to the media that they were responding to a 911 call from someone claiming to have been stabbed with a knife, though Captain Peter Zarcone later admitted that police were unable to find any victims who were cut by a knife.

Reporters have noted that it's unusual for police to post pictures of evidence in active cases--leading to speculation that police were looking to justify their actions and attempting to prevent anger boiling over as a result of another unprovoked police shooting.

Even if you chose to accept the LAPD's version of events, it's clear that J was--at worst--in possession of a weapon far less dangerous than those carried by the police, or the automatic rifles that notorious Nevada rancher and tax evader Cliven Bundy and friends recently pointed at federal law enforcement agents, without even being arrested, let alone injured or killed in response to their threatening actions.

The LAPD's response--to open fire in a heavily traveled tourist area--is also reminiscent of a 2013 shooting by the NYPD in Times Square, where police accidentally shot two bystanders while in pursuit of an unarmed Black suspect.

In that case, police actually initially charged the suspect they had been trying to kill with "assault" for the shootings that the police committed--arguing that the suspect "created the situation that injured innocent bystanders." Although no bystanders were injured in the LA shooting, bystanders reportedly had to scramble for cover in area stores when the police opened fire.

As ThinkProgress wrote:

"While details of (the December 6) shooting are still emerging, officers seemed to have engaged in the same rapid escalation that has been criticized in other recent shootings. In St. Louis this past August, officers shot a man holding a knife less than 20 seconds after arriving at the convenience store where he had allegedly stolen two cans of soda.

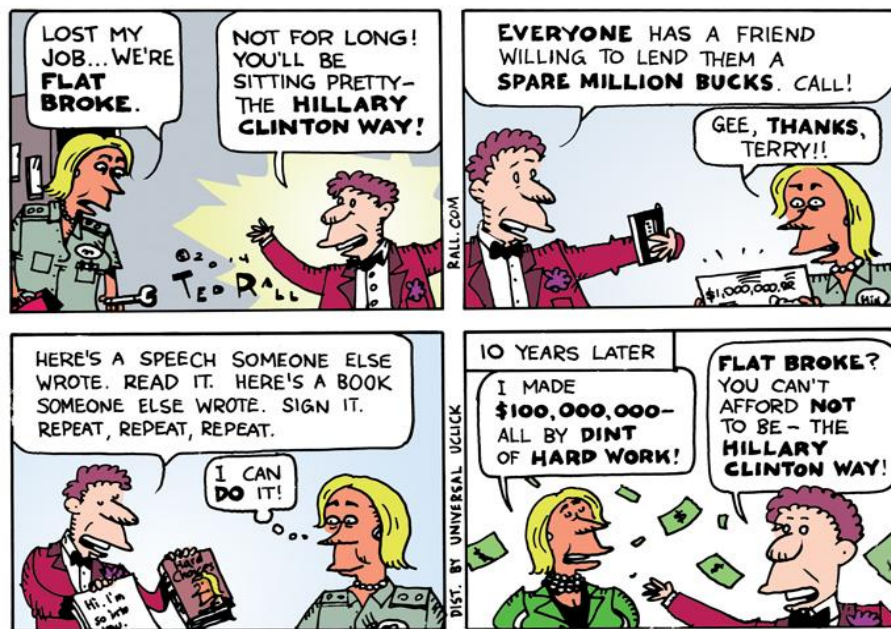
“While police in Los Angeles, St. Louis, and New York City have long been criticized over their deployment of lethal force, Burlington, Vt., officers had not fired their guns on duty in 16 years when they killed a mentally ill man last November because he was brandishing a shovel.”

J was white, and a young white man identifying himself as J's cousin and fellow street performer has been deeply involved in the Hollywood and Highland protests against police violence.

This led to an impassioned, but respectful debate among participants at a protest on December 7, over whether the movement should use the slogan #BlackLivesMatter or #AllLivesMatter.

While most participants agreed that "Black Lives Matter" correctly reflects the overwhelming reality that police forces in the U.S. target Black Americans more than anybody else for harassment, arrest and violence, the LAPD's needless killing of a young white street performer shows that this system will direct its murderous violence against all manner of impoverished and marginalized people.

DANGER: CAPITALISTS AT WORK



Military Resistance In PDF Format?

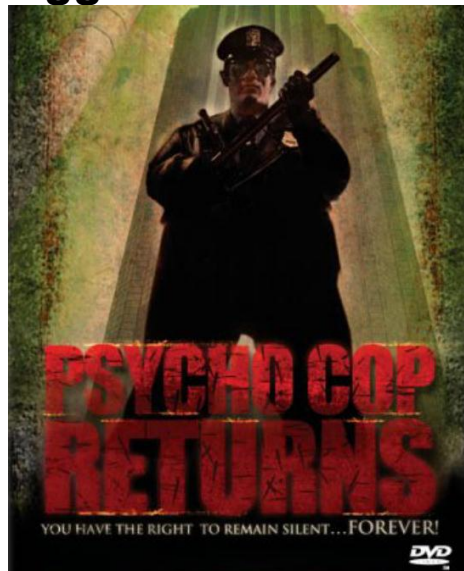
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DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK



RECEIVED:

“It's Time To Disband, Fire And Jail The Members Of The Biggest Racket Mob In NYC”



A number of people have expressed their view of Military Resistance 12L11, December 20, 2014, The New York City Police Declare War

Here are two comments:

#1

From: Michael Novick (antiracistaction_la@yahoo.com)
Sent: Dec 21, 2014
Subject: Re: Military Resistance 12L11: NY City Police Declare War

This is nothing new about the PBA. [New York City Patrolmen's Benevolent Association]

In the 60s, people used to chant, The PBA is the KKK.

They joined forces with the American Nazi Party of George Lincoln Rockwell and the Birch Society to overthrow, by referendum, a toothless "Civilian Complaint Review Board set up by (Republican) Mayor John Lindsay in 1965.

It was an election that helped Nixon shape his so-called "Southern strategy", actually a strategy to use coded racism to win elections.

#2

From: "Bob (Big Tree) Smith
Subject: Fwd: [AmeriConscience] Military Resistance 12L11: NY City Police Declare War
Date: Dec 21, 2014

Since the police have decided they and nobody else have the final say on how and where they police.

It's time to disband, fire and jail the members of the biggest racket mob in NYC.

They have no honor, no legitimate purpose and no intention of cleaning them self up.

The only actual legal authority left in NYC is the men and women who have suffered high taxes, illegal activity by the politicians and police and the banksters who own those politicians. Read this and ask yourself if the same can not be said about the State and Federal governments including the supreme Court Jesters and Presidents.

I would take part if I was able.

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