

GI SPECIAL 3D41:

Soldiers Against War: The Story Of The World War I Christmas Truce



German and British soldiers fraternize – Christmas 1914

[Thanks to John Gingerich, Veterans For Peace, for sending in.]

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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:

"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.

"It belied the bellicose slogans and suggested that the men fighting and often dying were, as usual, proxies for governments and issues that had little to do with their everyday lives. A candle lit in the darkness of Flanders, the truce flickered briefly and survives only in memoirs, letters, song, drama and story." (p. xvi).

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)***

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in

Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Soldier From Hockley Killed

12/09/05 KXAN

A 23-year-old soldier from Texas has been killed in Iraq. The Defense Department today announced Sergeant Michael C. Taylor of Hockley died Wednesday in Balad.

D-O-D says an improvised explosive device went off near Taylor's truck during combat operations.

Taylor was assigned to the Third Battalion, 13th Field Artillery, 214th Field Artillery Brigade of the Third Corps Artillery at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

Shore GI Dies After Falling Ill In Iraq



Christensen

11/29/05 BY MATT PORIO, TOMS RIVER BUREAU, Asbury Park Press

Pfc. Ryan D. Christensen — in the crisp new suit he'd bought just for the occasion — walked his mother down the aisle for her wedding in January. Muscular, clean-cut, looking every bit the man the Army had helped him become.

It is a lasting memory for those who knew the Shore area man best, an illustration of his devotion to family and the maturity and direction he gained in the service.

The 22-year-old, who developed a bacterial infection while serving in Iraq about two weeks ago, died on Thanksgiving in a hospital in South Carolina.

Nearly a year ago, the Army had delayed Christensen's redeployment so he could stay in New Jersey for his mother's wedding day. He was happy she was marrying a man he loved so much. Soon after, he joined his comrades in Iraq, where he served for nearly a year.

Monday, Christensen's family (his mother and stepfather, Suzette and Mark Detulio, live in Brick) still wasn't sure what exactly killed him.

About two weeks ago, in Iraq, he developed a fever and rash, said his uncle, Charles Conner, 41, of Lacey's Forked River section. He was taken to hospitals in Kuwait, then Germany, and then back to the United States, where he was treated in Georgia and South Carolina, Conner said.

"It's hard to make sense of the whole thing," said the Rev. Brian T. Butch, a family friend and the pastor of Holy Innocents Church in Neptune. "On Tuesday, he was sitting up in bed talking, and on Thursday he died."

Christensen grew up in the Manasquan area and attended Manasquan High School, then earned his high school diploma through an adult education program at Monmouth County Vocational School District. He joined the Army in August 2002, Conner said.

**LETHAL ENVIRONMENT:
NO HONORABLE MISSION:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW!**



US soldiers search a building in Baghdad, November 1, 2005. (AFP/File/David Furst)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

30% Of Afghans Favor Killing U.S. Occupation Troops

12.8.05 ABC News

Three in 10 Afghans say attacks against U.S. forces can be justified. There are about 18,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, with more than 250 killed to date, including nearly twice as many in 2005 as in any previous year.

TROOP NEWS

“Questioning The War Isn't Unpatriotic” “Not Questioning It Is Unpatriotic” Sgt. Says

December 10, 2005 By Maura Reynolds and Faye Fiore, L.A. Times Staff Writers

Former Army Staff Sgt. Marissa Sousa, 27, who served two tours in Iraq, said debate at home was hardly a pressing concern in the field.

"For soldiers on the ground ... their main objective, regardless of what the Pentagon or Bush says, is to take care of themselves and their friends," she said. "They want that ticket home."

Sousa said the debate over Iraq was essential.

"Questioning the war isn't unpatriotic — not questioning it is unpatriotic," she said.

Patty Saunders leads a spouse support group at Ft. Polk, La. Her husband, Army Sgt. Charles Saunders, has been in Iraq almost a year with a transportation unit.

She said the spouses had expressed no concern about debate undermining morale either at home or in the field.

"Talk is cheap. They can talk all day, and they do talk all day," she said, referring to Congress. "As long as they never say our soldiers are doing wrong — that they are causing more bad than good — then it's just another debate. It's like the budget. You don't pay much attention."

One of the trickiest questions in public debate is whether calling for withdrawal risks sending a message that the sacrifices already made — including the deaths of more than 2,000 troops — have been in vain.

Saunders said talk of withdrawal earned spouses' attention, but not for that reason.

"When they talk about withdrawal, my little ears perk up because that means he might be coming home," she said. "And when they talk about sending more troops, they perk up because that means he might have to go again."

“THE BIGGEST VULNERABILITY WE HAVE IN IRAQ IS THE CONVOYS”

December 9, 2005 ALEXANDER COCKBURN, The Independent (UK) [Excerpt]

On the heels of the second in Bush's series of four speeches on the war in Iraq, Rep John Murtha returned to the attack in a press conference, responding to Bush's claims.

“The biggest vulnerability we have in Iraq is the convoys. Every convoy is attacked. When I was in Anbar, at Haditha, every single convoy was attacked that goes there to bring the logistics and supplies that they need. That's the most vulnerable part of our deployment.

“And if you have half the troops there, you're going to still have to supply them, resupply them on the ground and they're going to be attacked. When I said we can't win a military victory, it's because the Iraqis have turned against us.”

“He Will Send Our Sons To Die, But He Won't Come And Speak To The Mothers”

December 09 2005 RAYMOND DUNCAN and CAMERON SIMPSON, Newsquest (Herald & Times) Limited

It was a whistle-stop appearance, but there was time enough for the tall figure, all in black save for the white peace poppy on her lapel, to create a stir.

The minute Cindy Sheehan stepped from the car outside the Scottish Parliament, the 60-strong group of anti-war campaigners, including two other mothers who lost children in Iraq, surged towards her.

Among those demonstrators waiting to greet her was Rose Gentle whose son, Gordon, also lost his life in the conflict.

The two met earlier this year when Mrs Gentle, 42, from Glasgow, flew out to the US to take part in an anti-war march and rally in Washington.

Also there yesterday was Susan Smith, 44, from Staffordshire, whose son, Phillip, was killed by a roadside bomb in Iraq.

All three took the microphone to launch a fierce criticism of Jack McConnell, the first minister, Mrs Gentle accusing him of being "a coward and a disgrace to Scotland".

She added: "He will send our sons to die, but he won't come and speak to the mothers. He can't look us in the eyes."

Mrs Sheehan took up the attack, comparing Mr McConnell to her president: "They don't have as much courage as our sons did and they don't have the answers to our questions."

Recruiters Back Down: Grandmothers Enlist In Army To Protest Evil War In Iraq



Recruiter talks with grandmothers
Photo by Kyndell Harkness, Star-Tribune

[Thanks to Mark Shapiro, who sent this in.]

Dec. 6, 2005 by Dane Smith, Star-Tribune [Minneapolis-St. Paul]

Eleven antiwar activists who are the grandmothers of 48 grandchildren marched into an Army recruiting station near the University of Minnesota Tuesday morning and volunteered to enlist.

The protesters described themselves as longtime peace activists. "The idea is to make a statement about the futility of war," said Sue Ann Martinson of Minneapolis, a spokeswoman for the event.

Initially, recruiters at the station refused to allow the women to fill out enlistment forms. Then they sat on the floor, and Martinson said they were prepared to be arrested.

"I respectfully asked them to leave, and they have refused, and I've asked the police to help us resolve this," Capt. Valent Bernat, a recruiter, said as events unfolded.

After police arrived and spoke with the protesters, recruiters agreed to allow them to fill out enlistment forms. They did so and departed.

"There's incredibly aggressive recruiting going on," Martinson said, explaining the protest's purpose.

"Our children are not cannon fodder," read one of the protesters' signs.

One of the 11 was Erica Bouza, wife of former Minneapolis Police Chief Tony Bouza and a longtime peace activist. "We grandmothers cannot sit quietly by and watch our youth being cajoled into the Army to die or be maimed in a senseless war," Bouza said in a news release.

Mary Lou Ott of Edina, who said she is the grandmother of 19, said the recruiters were "very polite and kind to us." But, she added, "This is a bloody war, an evil war, an immoral war, and we wanted to find creative ways of demonstrating that."

Bernat said the maximum age for enlistment is 40 for the Reserve and 35 for the regular Army. But he described the 11 grandmothers as "a nice group of ladies" and expressed relief that the incident was amicably resolved.

"We're not here to get people in trouble," Bernat said. "I served a year in Iraq. I have my opinions. They have theirs."

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

“Support Our Troops” A Refuge For Scoundrels

December 8, 2005, Richard Cohen, Washington Post [Excerpt]

If, as Samuel Johnson said, "patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel," then "support our troops" is very close by.

It is being used to deflect criticism of the war in Iraq, or to rebut those who call for a pullout or question how incompetents seized control of the government in a coup by ideologues.

In the lexicon of some, the only way to support our troops is to ensure that more of them die.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

One CIA Manager Told His Staff, “If Bush Wants To Go To War, It’s Your Job To Give Him A Reason To Do So”

None of this military gluttony would have been possible without Bush’s war on terror. As St. Clair proves, this war was without cause either in Afghanistan or Iraq. He documents how Bush overruled offers from his own emissary Kabir Mohammed as well as the Taliban to deliver Bin Laden to U.S. custody. Instead, hungry for revenge and imperial domination, Bush launched a vengeful war for imperial domination of Central Asia, its oil and natural gas reserves, and the revitalization of the military industrial complex.

December 9, 2005 Book Review by Ashley Smith, Socialist Worker

Jeffrey St. Clair, Grand Theft Pentagon: How War Contractors Rip Off America and Threaten the World. Common Courage Press, 2005, 336 pages, \$18.95.

THE BUSH administration’s reign of error and terror has left a pile of corruption, waste and destruction that rivals the muck of the Augean stable. Jeffrey St. Clair’s new book,

Grand Theft Pentagon, accomplishes the Herculean task of exposing these abuses with brilliant investigative journalism carried off with unmatched sarcasm.

After the Cold War, the military industrial complex was desperate for a new conflict to legitimize profligate spending on war, weapons systems and their associated services. St. Clair chronicles how Bush's so-called "war on terror" has enabled our rulers to rekindle the incestuous relationship between politicians, the Pentagon and military contractors.

The marriage counselor of this foul union is none other than George Bush himself.

In perhaps the funniest exposé of the Bushes yet written, St. Clair tells the story of this company masquerading as a family. The portrait is not very flattering, politically or personally. Demonstrating their congenital penchant for putting profit before all else, the dynasty's founder, Prescott Bush, barely escaped charges of treason for wheeling and dealing with the Nazis during the Second World War.

The unlikely hero of this family saga is "W." St. Clair shows how he spent his youth boozing, snorting coke, womanizing, failing classes, securing draft deferments, dodging national guard duty, and starting and wrecking corporations for which other people paid the price.

But this loser found himself reincarnated as a caring conservative. With the help of corporate money, lessons at the foot of Karl Rove, lots of dirty tricks and apparently direct conversations with the deity, he found himself selected by the Supreme Court as U.S. ruler on the eve of 9/11.

Bush and the military-industrial complex used the tragedy to fulfill their imperial fantasies and line their pockets. With Bush threatening war on the planet, the Pentagon got the useless and dangerous Star Wars Missile Defense, the unneeded B-767 tanker plane, the practically untested F-22 fighter and the Stryker armored personnel carrier that is almost useless in Iraq since it is vulnerable to improvised explosive devices.

Boeing, Lockheed and a handful of other corporations thus bilked American taxpayers of billions of dollars for senseless weapons.

These weapons contracts were just the tip of the iceberg. The Bush administration also gave no-bid contracts to various private corporations to service the "war on terror."

Clinton and Gore opened up this new space for corporate plunder through their "Reinventing Government" program that opened the floodgate to subcontracting government services and industries. Halliburton, Bechtel and others were consequently able to get contracts for everything from doing military laundry to rebuilding Iraq's oil industry.

Disproving neoliberal nostrums, they overcharged the government, provided inferior service, and, in the case of rebuilding Iraq, completely failed to restore electricity, running water or reconstruction of buildings destroyed by the U.S. conquest. Despite being investigated, they got off scot-free and, astonishingly, got new contracts to rebuild New Orleans.

Far from calling the Bush administration, the politicians of both parties have aided and abetted the process. As St. Clair writes, "Today, the roots of the two dominant political parties intertwine and are irrigated by the same freshets of corporate money, much of it coming from the weapons industry cartel."

None of this military gluttony would have been possible without Bush's war on terror. As St. Clair proves, this war was without cause either in Afghanistan or Iraq. He documents how Bush overruled offers from his own emissary Kabir Mohammed as well as the Taliban to deliver Bin Laden to U.S. custody. Instead, hungry for revenge and imperial domination, Bush launched a vengeful war for imperial domination of Central Asia, its oil and natural gas reserves, and the revitalization of the military industrial complex.

He also shows how, from the very beginning, the Bush administration set its eyes on Iraq, despite the fact that it had no connection to 9/11. In Rumsfeld's words, the Bush regime should "Go massive. Sweep it all up. Things related and not." So they concocted lies about weapons of mass destruction to justify a war for empire and oil.

And they found willing liars in the rest of the establishment, from the CIA to the Democratic Party and the servile corporate media. One CIA manager told his staff, "If Bush wants to go to war, it's your job to give him a reason to do so." Hillary Clinton, John Kerry and the rest of the Democrats save for a handful of dissenters joined the chorus of liars.

But now the tide has turned against Bush, the war and its profiteers.

As St. Clair concludes, the task is to reinvigorate "a militant and uncompromising popular movement, unaligned with either political party, whose first task must be to put an end to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and snuff out further imperial adventurism in Iran, Syria and North Korea." *Grand Theft Pentagon* is an invaluable tool in the building of just such a movement.

Deja Vu (All Over Again) In Pictures

[Thanks to James Starowicz, Veterans For Peace, for sending this in.]

Dec 05, 2005 by BOHICA, Dailykos.com

"Iraq is not like Viet Nam."

You've all heard this by the apologists for the war.

John Fogarty wrote this song a while back and it keeps going over and over in my head. I thought, "What would a pictorial comparison look like?"

Having many images collected on my computer, I started putting together a compilation of them with the words from the song.

I couldn't stop there so I put them to the music in a slide show video format.

You can download it [Here](#)

“You're Not A Group Of ‘Pussies’” “You Can't Kill Arabs And Then Cry About It”

<p>And we must tell Brig. Gen. A: You are confused. Your soldiers, fresh from combat action in Kabatia and not wanting to take part in any more assassinations – are not traitors to be shot in the back. Quite the opposite.</p>
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12/8/2005 By David Zonshein, YNetNews. **David Zonshein is a first lieutenant in the IDF reserves and one of the heads of the "Courage to Refuse" movement**

In January, 1943 hundreds of thousands of people died in the desperate battle for Stalingrad. On both sides there were a significant number of "self-assassinations" – commanders and officers refused to allow soldiers to retreat, and shot those who tried "as befitting traitors and defectors."

Now, for those who have forgotten their history lessons, we've got an IDF commander from the elite Duvdevan unit who says the same thing could have happened to his soldiers who refused to take part in a military operation due to trauma suffered in a previous maneuver.

"In other armies they would already have been shot in the back," says Brig. Gen. A. And as if that wasn't enough, another company commander added, "You're not a group of 'pussies.' You can't kill Arabs and then cry about it."

This story brings to the fore two sacred cows, and we've got Duvdevan officers offering to kill two birds with one stone: The first scared cow is related to the IDF's image, as it is seen in the general community overall and specifically amongst combat soldiers.

As soldiers, we were taught that our army is especially ethical, different that other armies. An army whose soldiers were more important than anything.

True, the Duvdevan officer was speaking about things that happen in other armies, but it might be worth a whisper in the ears of Brig. Gen. A: There is no western army in the world that would shoot soldiers who refused to take part in battle, for any reason.

More than that, Jewish tradition provides special consideration for people who feel they cannot fight: "Who is the man who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, and let him not melt the heart of his fellows, like his heart" (Deut. 20:8).

The second sacred cow to go, and whose destruction is particularly important following the Gaza disengagement – also relates to the supposed higher morals of the IDF.

For years the IDF has existed in the light of tales from combat soldiers following the Yom Kippur and Six Day wars. The idea of "shoot and cry" was engraved on many hearts, as expressed in one such tale.

"Our strength lies in the fact that we, like everyone, carry out brutal acts of war. But when we return to camp at night – we cry over the brutality we carried out in the morning," said one combat veteran.

But here we have an officer rebuking his soldiers: There is no way you can kill Arabs by day and cry about it by night. As if killing – especially the killing of Arabs – is ordinary, routine.

Once upon a time, it was important to us to at least appear to grapple with difficult moral issues. Apparently, today it is somewhat less important.

Especially now, when the public is voting with its feet against our control of the occupied territories, which are considered a tremendous burden by Israeli society, and the public is voting for a social public agenda, it is crucial to consider the difficult moral problem the IDF has been dealing with throughout the long years of occupation, and to fix it immediately.

The fight in the territories today is no longer a struggle between a relatively small power fighting a huge, merciless enemy, as it was in Stalingrad.

And we must tell Brig. Gen. A: You are confused. Your soldiers, fresh from combat action in Kabatia and not wanting to take part in any more assassinations – are not traitors to be shot in the back. Quite the opposite.

And as long as we continue to fight this war, our moral level will continue to degenerate, as will the standards of language used by IDF officers.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Collaborator Troops Sent To War In Cabbage Trucks;

Politicians Say U.S. Command Knew Of Defense \$ Thievery

12.9.05 By Patrick Cockburn in Baghdad, The Independent (UK)

The Iraqi army and police have paid heavily in lives because of the misappropriation of the almost all the defence procurement budget.

Insurgents are often better armed than government forces. Soldiers travel through Baghdad in ageing white pick-ups normally used to carry cabbages to the market.

A mystery surrounding the alleged misappropriation of military procurement budget is that it passed unnoticed by American and British officials in Baghdad. This was despite the fact that they were supposedly supervising the build up of a new Iraqi army and police force.

Mr Shaalan and Mr Cattan both protest that nothing was done in the Iraqi Ministry of Defence at this time that was not known to the US.

A problem facing the investigation into the missing money is that so many politicians and officials from the Sunni, Shia and Kurdish communities in Iraq were either implicated or failed to notice what was happening. The National Assembly has not lifted Mr Shaalan's parliamentary immunity.

**OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION
BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!**

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

Frequently-Asked Questions About President Bush's 'Plan For Victory'

December 6, 2005 By Will Durst, AlterNet

Q. President Bush recently announced his "Plan for Victory." What does this plan entail?

A. It's two pronged. There is a short-term plan and a long-term plan.

Q. And what are they?

A. The short-term plan is to keep the Democrats from regaining control of Congress in '06.

Q. And the long-term plan?

A. Keep the Democrats from regaining control of the White House in '08. Or acquire photographs of Hillary Clinton in bed with a goat and/or a woman.

Q. So nothing about Iraq then?

A. Well, now that you mention it... there was something about the brave, freedom-loving Iraqis, and how together we are winning the tough struggle against violent extremism, but it was just more of the same in an attempt to rescue Bush's poll numbers from falling through the floor like an anvil made of dark matter.

Q. What is the "Plan for Victory" going to replace?

A. The "Plan for Quagmire" we've been following the last three years.

Q. Didn't he reveal a strategy for winning?

A. Yeah, but, you know what, so do the Chicago Cubs. Every spring. I don't imagine election-bound Republicans are looking forward to changing their slogan to: "We'll get 'em next year."

Q. What is their slogan now?

A. Lately, it seems to be "Incompetent Corrupt Cronies 'R Us."

Q. Didn't he also refuse to set a timetable for withdrawal, saying it would send a message to the world that America was weak?

A. Yes, he did. So apparently he's okay with continuing to send a message to the world that America is a big bad bully who will beat the crap out of you if we don't like the way you look at us.

Q. Don't we run the danger of alienating our allies if we just cut and run?

A. Cut and run? There's no running. This isn't running. This is walking. Backwards. Really fast backward walking. Who knows, we might even walk backwards really fast right into Iran or Syria.

Q. How does the President define victory?

A. According to a separate 35-page document accompanying the speech, titled "National Strategy for Victory in Iraq," victory means creating the conditions that allow us to leave.

Q. Is he saying that getting out of Iraq is our only path to victory?

A. No. No. No. A lot of victories await us. Tiny victories and little victories and medium-sized victories.

Not to say we haven't experienced victories already. A couple of tiny victories, a moral victory and an election victory. And if we string a bunch of these little victories together, it could add up to a nice medium-sized victory.

Or a gaggle of little victories and a medium victory or a series of medium victories coupled with one or two moral victories could add up to a big victory. And two or three big victories could result in a humongous victory.

Q. What is that?

A. A Republican victory. In November '06 and '08.

Q. What is the best case scenario?

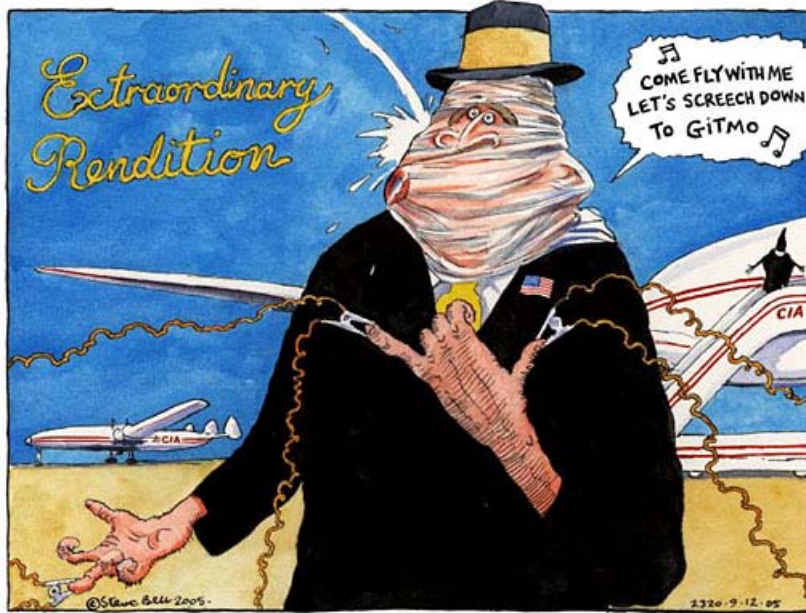
A. We try to incubate democracy in the Mideast, and whenever the political costs at home get too high, we declare victory and leave -- leaving our secret prison camps intact.

“THE ULTIMATE TERRORIST” APPEARS WITH DISCIPLE IN WASHINGTON DC



Southern Baptist President Jack Graham declared, "Satan is the ultimate terrorist."

(AFP/Luke Frazza)



[Thanks to NB, who sent this in.]

British Man Arrested For Wearing Anti-War T-Shirt

10 December 2005 The Independent UK

John Catt, an 80-year-old peace campaigner, was stopped by police officers as a terrorist suspect in Brighton in September - for wearing a T-shirt with anti-Blair and Bush slogans.

Mr Catt, who served in the RAF during the Second World War, was stopped, searched by police and made to sign a form confirming he had been interviewed under the 2000 Terrorism Act.

The official record of the encounter confirms that the "purpose" of the search was "terrorism" and the "grounds for intervention" were "carrying placard and T-shirt with anti-Blair info" (sic).

Mr. Catt was offered a caution by police, but refused and plans to plead not guilty at a trial due to start in January. He had traveled into Brighton from his home in Witdean, on the outskirts of the city.

"I said I was going to voice my opposition to the Iraq War. He (the policeman) said: 'We're going to give you a copy of this form.'"

"People should have the right to protest non-violently. The anti-terrorism laws should not be used to stop people doing that."

CLASS WAR REPORTS

Capitalism At Work:

Chinese Police Slaughter Protesters

December 10, 2005 By AUDRA ANG, Associated Press Writer

BEIJING -- Armed with guns and shields, hundreds of riot police sealed off a southern Chinese village after fatally shooting as many as 20 demonstrators and were searching for the protest organizers, according to villagers and a newspaper report Saturday.

If that death toll is confirmed it would be the deadliest known use of force by security forces against Chinese civilians since the killings around Tiananmen Square in 1989, and marked an escalation in the social protests that have convulsed the Chinese countryside.

During the demonstration Tuesday in Dongzhou, a village in southern Guangdong province, thousands of people gathered to protest the amount of money offered by the government as compensation for land to be used to construct a wind power plant.

Police fired into the crowd and killed a handful of people, mostly men, villagers reached by telephone said Friday. Villagers' accounts of the death toll ranged from two and 10, with many missing.

On Saturday, Hong Kong's Apple Daily newspaper raised the death toll to nearly 20, citing villagers. There was no explanation for the discrepancy.

Although security forces often use tear gas and truncheons to disperse demonstrators, it is extremely rare for them to fire into a crowd -- as the military did in putting down pro-democracy demonstrations around Tiananmen Square, when hundreds, if not thousands, were killed.

State media have made no mention of the incident and both provincial and local governments have repeatedly refused to comment. This is typical in China, where the ruling Communist Party controls the media and lower-level authorities are leery of releasing information without permission from the central government. **[There is nothing whatever "Communist" or "Socialist" about the rich scum who own the government in China. The Chinese ruling class are nothing but thieves stealing the words, and everything else that isn't nailed down, so they can live well while the Chinese working class suffers, sweats and starves. They play the word game**

the same way the rich do in the USA, who own and operate both political parties and the government here for their own enrichment, while pretending the USA is a "democracy."]

All the villagers said they were nervous and scared and most did not want to be identified for fear of retribution. One man said the situation was still "tumultuous."

A 14-year-old girl said a local official visited the village on Friday and called the shootings "a misunderstanding."

"He said (he) hoped it wouldn't become a big issue," the girl said over the telephone. "This is not a misunderstanding. I am afraid. I haven't been to school in days."

She added, "Come save us."

"The riot police are gathered outside our village. We've been surrounded," she said, sobbing. "Most of the police are armed. We dare not to go out of our home."

"We are not allowed to buy food outside the village. They asked the nearby villagers not to sell us goods," the woman said. "The government did not give us proper compensation for using our land to build the development zone and plants. Now they come and shoot us. I don't know what to say."

One woman said an additional 20 people were wounded.

"They gathered because their land was taken away and they were not given compensation," she said. "The police thought they wanted to make trouble and started shooting."

She said there were "several hundred police with guns in the roads outside the village on Friday. "I'm afraid of dying. People have already died."

Hong Kong's English language South China Morning Post newspaper on Saturday quoted villagers who said authorities were trying to conceal the deaths by offering families money to give up bodies of the dead.

"They offered us a sum but said we would have to give up the body," an unidentified relative of one slain villager, 31-year-old Wei Jin, was quoted as saying. "We are not going to agree."

Police were carrying photos of villagers and trying to find people linked to the protest, the newspaper said, citing villagers.

The number of protests in China's vast, poverty-stricken countryside has risen in recent months as anger comes to a head over corruption, land seizures and a yawning wealth gap that experts say now threatens social stability. The government says about 70,000 such conflicts occurred last year, although many more are believed to go unreported.

Like many cities in China, Shanwei, the city where Dongzhou is located, has cleared suburban land once used for farming to build industrial zones. State media have said the Shanwei Red Bay industrial zone is slated to have three electricity-generating plants -- a coal-fired plant, a wave power plant and a wind farm.

Earlier reports said the building of the \$743 million coal-fired power plant, a major government-invested project for the province, also was disrupted by a dispute over land compensation.

Authorities in Dongzhou were trying to find the leaders of Tuesday's demonstration, a villager said.

The man said the bodies of some of the shooting victims "are just lying there."

"Why did they shoot our villagers?" he asked. "They are crazy!"

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation or the criminals running the government in Washington - is the first reason for Traveling Soldier. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers.

<http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

“Animosity Toward Executives As A Class Rising To A New Level”

[Thanks to D and Phil G who sent this in.]

And every report of high-dollar executive compensation - Philip Purcell's \$113 million payout to leave Morgan Stanley, James M. Kilts's \$165 million for selling Gillette to Procter & Gamble - strengthens the feeling that business funnels money from the workers to the elite. [Duh.]

December 9, 2005 By CLAUDIA H. DEUTSCH, The New York Times Company

More than ever, Americans do not trust business or the people who run it.

Pollsters, researchers, even many corporate chiefs themselves say that business is under attack by a majority of the public, which believes that executives are bent on destroying the environment, cooking the books and lining their own pockets.

Even as corporate scandals like Tyco's recede, fresh complaints - over high energy costs and soaring oil company profits, planned layoffs in the auto industry, bribery and conflicts of interest in military contracting - fuel the antipathy.

And every report of high-dollar executive compensation - Philip Purcell's \$113 million payout to leave Morgan Stanley, James M. Kilts's \$165 million for selling Gillette to Procter & Gamble - strengthens the feeling that business funnels money from the workers to the elite.

"There is a sense that business is a zero-sum game, that if companies are making a lot of money, it must be coming out of someone else's pocket," said Michael Hammer, a management consultant who writes frequently about business.

Executives ruefully agree with his assessment. "This is a challenging time for big corporations," said John D. Hofmeister, who runs the United States operations of Shell Oil Company. The modern feeling, he said, is "big is bad."

It is not clear whether such views will bring significant change, but it is clear that the disaffection is spreading. In a Roper poll conducted from July 28 to Aug. 10, 72 percent of respondents felt that wrongdoing was widespread in industry; last year, 66 percent felt that was the case.

Only 2 percent checked off "very trustworthy" to describe the chief executives of very large companies, down from 3 percent last year. And only 9 percent said they had full trust in financial services institutions, down from 14 percent last year.

Nor do Americans expect much help from Washington: 90 percent of respondents to a Harris poll, conducted Nov. 8-13, said big companies had too much influence on government, up from 83 percent last year.

But animosity toward executives as a class, not just the institutions they work for, seems to be rising to a new level.

"Society has come to believe that the term 'crooked C.E.O.' is redundant," said Robert S. Miller, the chief executive of Delphi, the bankrupt auto parts company.

Even Republicans have joined the attacks. At a recent Congressional hearing, senators from both parties demanded that oil executives defend their record profits. And now some Senate Democrats, unsatisfied with what they heard, are clamoring for the oil executives to be called back again, this time to testify under oath.

But why the rampant distrust?

Some executives concede that business brought the opprobrium on itself. "Today's companies are run not by entrepreneurs, but by traders who are increasingly preoccupied with short-term gain and profits," said Henry B. Schacht, the former chief executive of both Cummins and Lucent Technologies. (Mr. Schacht serves on the board of The New York Times Company.)

Others point out that the gap between the income of the top 10 to 20 percent and the rest of the work force keeps widening.

Technology has given the angry voices a more public outlet. The blogosphere is rife with postings castigating Coca-Cola, Wal-Mart and other big companies, citing everything from unfair labor practices to dangerous smokestack emissions.

Hollywood has long recognized that portraying sleazy business executives as bad guys is a crowd-pleaser. Michael Douglas won an Oscar in 1987 for his portrayal of a consummate greedy trader, Gordon Gekko, in the film "Wall Street."

Today, though, unscrupulous businesspeople are practically stock characters in movies. "You have to be so politically correct that the only guy you can safely portray as a villain is a business guy in a suit," Dr. Hammer, the consultant, said.

Received:

With Thanks For Replacement Of Traveling Soldier Computer

KP: Brookline, Mass: \$15
PA: Lake Oswego, NY \$40
JO (Code Pink) \$15
OL \$100 (or 95.80 after the paypal fees)

Received:

Smoke And Mirrors

From: H
To: GI Special
Sent: December 10, 2005
Subject: Smoke and Mirrors

I always knew our enemies suck but, it is all the more disturbing to consider how absolutely dirty and filthy they really are. It's stomach turning to ponder what some of them are willing to do but, it will certainly not hurt us in the long-run either, to expose their motives; for those who might not be in a position to see them from the same vantage point. By beating the filth-bags to the punch, before their vile motives have had a chance to make themselves fully manifest, we can hopefully ward off some of the more disgusting displays in the future.

Maybe the Christian Peacemaker abduction will end exactly like the Margaret Hassan atrocity; with nothing being filmed but, just mutilated bodies showing up

somewhere. The whole thing is just too off the wall at this point, to take it for authentic.

I see also, that they are actually using names now of "Sunni clerics" who are "supporting" the election ploy this December.

This gives me the opportunity to mention something that westerners might not know but, should be finding out as time progresses. That is that the Sunni cleric authority in Iraq is called, "The Muslim Scholars Association (MSA)".

There are, of course, differing views among members of the Association however, when any of their membership makes an announcement, this means something different than what any of the countless numbers of non-members, in the same area, might say.

Furthermore, when the MSA makes an official statement, we understand this to be the official position of all Sunni religious leaders in the region. They do not make official statements that frequently but, when they do, we understand this to represent all the Sunni religious leaders of that region; whether there is slight differing of opinion on the matter or not.

In the last months, there has been some buzz about voting in these elections being a form of "jihad" against the occupation; and that there are strategic benefits to acting in this way.

I believe it could be true, that such means, under certain circumstances, could be utilized as a supplement in strategy however, it is my understanding at this point, that after evaluating the current situation, it is the official position of the MSA that voting in these upcoming elections are NOT a valid form of jihad; thus, voting in the December elections is discouraged; if not prohibited altogether under the Islamic rules of warfare, which apply to this situation.

So, any manipulation of words that has come out to the contrary of this, is once again, likely a ruse that has been concocted by the enemy.

If I am wrong in any of this, I invite correction.

I also read an article in the Special, that accounted for some of Robert Fisk's statements about the western war media in Iraq, and how they are basically "echoing" statements made by the occupation military, and various "spokespeople"; without really pointing that fact out.

I didn't realize that there was such collusion within the western media but, now that I consider that, it makes total sense, given the widespread use of carbon-copy misinformation.

I would have thought that our media, as a whole, would have had more integrity than to have played that game but, I guess compromise is a nagging reality for those whose paychecks depend on it.

Solidarity,
H

GI Special Looks Even Better Printed Out

All GI Special issues achieved at website <http://www.militaryproject.org/> .

The following have also posted issues; there may be others:

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www.williambowles.info/qispecial, http://www.traprockpeace.org/qi_special/,
<http://www.albasrah.net/maqalat/english/qi-special.htm>

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