

GI SPECIAL 6L11:

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.

“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.”

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)***

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

G.I.s In Sadr City React To Shoe- Attack On Bush: “A Burst Of Laughter Came From The Soldiers In The Living Room” “A Lot Of The Soldiers Thought It Was Pretty Funny”

[Thanks to SSG N (ret'd) who sent this in. She writes: “Bush’s true legacy.”]

December 16, 2008 By Campbell Robertson, New York Times [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD — Late Monday night, as the international chattering classes were discussing the finer points of the Bush Shoe Throwing Incident, Lt. Jamen Miller’s platoon was on a six hour patrol in one of the world’s less Bush sympathetic neighborhoods, Sadr City.

They knocked on doors in the moonlight, as many soldiers that could piling out of the cold muddy streets into a soft warm living room while the platoon leader and his interpreter sipped tea with the owner of the house and asked if he knew such and such person and if so and so had been seen around the neighborhood lately.

The whole fact that the president had been in town at all wasn’t known for hours afterwards he arrived on Sunday and was really only worth mentioning because it explained the particular kind of patrol missions —a particularly boring kind—that are always ordered up along with an important visit.

“Hey you see George was hit with a shoe?” a soldier had asked Monday morning, laughing and lumping eggs into his plate in the kitchenette of the company’s security outpost.

“George who?”

And that was mostly it for Monday.

By the middle of the day most had heard about it, on the Internet, from wives back home, but it was more or less dismissed with “I can’t believe that, that’s some funny stuff” (or so paraphrased, for this is a family blog).

Midway through Monday night’s patrol, Lt. Miller, one of the sergeants and the interpreter were standing in a kitchen trying to iron out a misunderstanding with a couple of nervous looking Iraqi men, when a burst of laughter came from the soldiers in the living room.

The Shoe Throwing Incident was being shown on the Iraqi evening news, frequently, and in slow motion. The soldiers were guffawing and remarking on Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki's impressive attempt to block the second shoe.

The Iraqis in the room stood in the back, unsmiling, as the throws were replayed, again and again. Then the news moved on to another story and the soldiers moved back out into the cold streets.

A few houses later, the last stop of the night, a little confrontation broke out when the women of the houses assumed the soldiers were robbers — their house had been broken into earlier this year — and began screaming. The owner of the house was angry but Lt. Miller calmed the man's nerves, and they began the usual chat about the neighborhood.

The next day, Lt. Miller told me that, out of nowhere, the man in the last house had announced that he wanted to apologize for the Shoe Incident, insisting that it not reflect poorly on all Iraqis.

And, he said, "I told him that a lot of the soldiers thought it was pretty funny."

**Iraqis Doubt U.S. Will Honor
Withdrawal Dates:
“Odierno’s Statement Is The First Of
A Series Of Violations Of The
Agreement”
[This One Is Dedicated To The Silly,
Stupid Shits In The “Anti-War”
Movement Pissing Their Pants With
Delight Over Emperor Obama’s Lies]**

[Thanks to Phil G, who sent this in.]

December 15, 2008 By Adam Ashton, McClatchy Newspapers [Excerpts]

BAGHDAD — The deadlines sound clear enough in the security agreement: U.S. combat troops must be out of Iraqi urban areas by June, and all Americans should withdraw from the country by Dec. 31, 2011.

However, those deadlines have appeared anything but firm to Iraqis over the past week. Iraqi government spokesman Ali al Dabbagh suggested Thursday that Americans might be needed in the country for another 10 years.

And U.S. Gen. Ray Odierno, the top military commander in Iraq, said Saturday that American forces might remain in Iraqi cities after June, despite the deadline in the security agreement.

Many Iraqis already were skeptical that Americans would follow through on the terms of the security agreement.

Odierno's remarks played into fears that those dates wouldn't be honored.

"To start with, we are not satisfied by that agreement," said Ali Mahmoud Rahdi, 53, a retired Ministry of Trade employee in Baghdad.

"These statements made me angry. Iraq will be always unfairly dealt with."

"Odierno's statement is the first of a series of violations of the agreement," said Osama al Nijeifi, a member of parliament from the moderate Iraqiyah List party, in the al Mashriq newspaper.

REALLY BAD PLACE TO BE: ALL HOME NOW



A U.S. Army soldier watches at the top floor of a building, as black smoke rises on the sky in the city of Mosul, Nov. 14, 2008. (AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris)

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

British Soldier Killed In Zarghun Kalay

18 Dec 08 Ministry of Defence

It is with great regret that the Ministry of Defence must confirm the death of Rifleman Stuart Nash who was killed in action in Afghanistan yesterday, 17 December 2008.

Rifleman Stuart Nash was killed in action during combat in Zarghun Kalay, Nad e Ali District, Helmand Province.

He was wounded as he was covering comrades from a compound rooftop while working as part of the 1 RIFLES Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) Battle Group. His fellow Riflemen administered first aid and he was evacuated by a Medical Emergency Response Team helicopter, but subsequently died of his wounds.

Great Moments In U.S. Military History: “American-Led Forces Blasted The Gate Of The House Early On Wednesday, Then Fatally Shot The Family’s Father And Mother And A Male Relative”

December 18, 2008 By ADAM B. ELLICK, NY Times [Excerpts]

KABUL, Afghanistan — A deadly United States military raid on a house near Afghanistan’s border with Pakistan became a new source of tension on Thursday, with the Americans calling it a successful counterterrorism strike and the Afghans saying it left three innocent civilians dead and two wounded, including a 4-year-old boy bitten by an attack dog.

The raid took place on Wednesday in the village of Kundi, in Khost Province.

President Hamid Karzai, who has grown increasingly impatient with the American-led war effort against the Taliban insurgency, condemned the raid in front of government leaders and foreign diplomats, saying that “entering by force to our people’s houses is against the government of Afghanistan.”

The raid took place on the same day that diplomats in Kabul called on foreign forces to increase their sensitivity to win over Afghans.

In Khost, American-led forces blasted the gate of the house early on Wednesday, then fatally shot the family's father and mother and a male relative, according to Tahir Khan Sabry, deputy governor of the province. Their relationship with the wounded boy was unclear, and another woman was also bitten. Mr. Sabry described all the victims as noncombatant civilians.

In recent months, the governor of Khost, Arsala Jamal, has frequently complained about the actions of United States Special Forces here. He said episodes that harmed civilians undermined the progress of reconstruction efforts.

In Khost, public outrage over the house raid was visible at the funerals for those who were killed.

The use of dogs in military actions is especially delicate for Afghans after the release of images showing dogs being used to intimidate detainees at the Bagram prison in Afghanistan and Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq.

"I saw the 4-year-old boy, and he had an injury under his knee that was definitely the mark of a dog bite," said Rasoul Adel, a local television reporter.

Who Could Believe It? U.S. Troops Dying To Defend A Sewer: Occupied Afghanistan Full Of Government Corruption

Dec. 18 (UPI) & By Jonathon Burch (Reuters)

Much-needed police reforms in Afghanistan are being hampered by widespread corruption, according to a report from the International Crisis Group.

Endemic corruption in the interior ministry, which runs the police, means promotions are often bought, not earned on merit. But they are also renowned for milking the populace for bribes.

The report, released Thursday by the Belgium-based independent non-governmental organization, says despite a concerted international effort to professionalize Afghanistan's police force, a lack of political will and corruption in the country are limiting any success, the Crisis Group reported.

The report, titled "Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy," says that with the strengthened insurgency, crime is not being addressed, causing a growing disillusionment among the people of Afghanistan.

Crisis Group officials call the Afghan Interior Ministry a “hub of systemic corruption.”

“There has been little political will in Kabul or foreign capitals to tackle the power-brokers who are preventing reform,” Samina Ahmed, Crisis Group South Asia project director, said in a statement.

“Organized crime and lawlessness lie at the heart of much popular disillusionment and instability.”

TROOP NEWS

Bulgarian Troops ALL Home NOW! No More Iraq, Ever



Bulgarian soldiers returning from Iraq stand in formation after their arrival at Sofia airport, December 17, 2008. The last 155 Bulgarian soldiers arrived in Sofia on Wednesday. REUTERS/Stoyan Nenov

Albanian Troops ALL Go Home NOW! No More Iraq, Ever

18 December 2008 Balkan Investigative Reporting Network

Albania is ending its presence in the United States-led mission in Iraq, local media reported on Thursday.

Defence Minister Gazmend Oketa, is currently in Mosul where he participated in a ceremony for the departure of the troops.

In Iraq, Albania maintains a 200 non-combat contingent, stationed at Mosul Airport.

Korean Troops All Get Home From Now; Heartbroken Soldiers No Longer In Iraq Supporting The Noble Cause



REUTERS/Shin Young-geun/Yonhap

12.18.08 Reuters: A South Korean soldier of Zaytun and Daiman unit upon his arrival from Iraq at a military airport in Seongnam, near Seoul, December 19, 2008.

South Korea, which once had the third-largest contingent of foreign soldiers in Iraq, ended its mission there on Friday by bringing home all of the troops.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Resistance Spreading: U.S. Troops Open Fire On Angry Student Demonstration In Fallujah; Iraqis Citizens Defy Collaborator Soldiers In Baghdad And Win!



University students with shoes were fired on by U.S. occupation troops during a protest in Fallujah Wednesday for the release of journalist Muntathar al Zaidi. MCT Photo

[Thanks to Pham Binh, Traveling Soldier, for the headline.]

People talk about Muntathar every where and in all times during the last two days, he has become, for many, an idol and a star to follow.

December 17, 2008 By Dulaimy, Inside Iraq

The square in front of the two floor bridge in Baghdad is closed by troops several times a day. The square is not far away from the Green Zoon and in front of the square the offices of the president and the head of the biggest parliamentary bloc lie.

No one ever objected, in the many times that I have been there sitting in the car waiting for the convoy of X official to pass by and after (they usually close the square a while before the convoy passes).

We all turn off our cars and sit their and wait.

Today is different.

I couldn't believe my eyes.

Around 12:30 p.m. several vehicles loaded with Iraqi soldiers accompanying two or three buses stopped in mid of the square and tried to close it (like every day) but they couldn't.

Drivers refused to obey, saying we are tired of closed roads.

The horns of tens of cars were loud, angry drivers yelling at soldiers who picked up their rifles trying to stop the cars that refused to stop.

Shots in the air and pointing rifles to vehicles failed, the convoy had to park in another place.

They convoy wanted to park in the mid of the circle because the soldiers wanted to talk and discuss something in mid of the square... imagine.

The drivers made it and the military saw, for the first time I think, a mass anger for blocking roads.

I have seen this square almost every day during the last four years and nothing like this happened.

The soldiers parked their vehicles in a way that allowed civilian cars to pass.

News from Fallujah of students demonstrated demanding the release of Muntathar, the journalist who threw the shoe at president Bush, waved their shoes and threw stones at the American soldiers things escalated and soldiers started to shoot injuring one student (according to eye witnesses).

These incidents and many quotes from ordinary people make me ask, did the reporter, Muntathar caused this?

People talk about Muntathar every where and in all times during the last two days, he has become, for many, an idol and a star to follow.

MORE:

Student Shot By U.S. Troops During Fallujah Protest

December 17, 2008 By Jenan Hussein and Laith Hammoudi, McClatchy Newspapers

Protesters said that indirect fire wounded one student, Zaid Salih.

“We demonstrated to express our support for Muntathar al Zaidi, but we were surprised with the entrance of the U.S. military,” said Ahmed Ismail, one of the protesters.

Dr. Thair al Jomaili treated Salih at a hospital and said that he was fine. The doctor said that the bullet went through one of Salih’s feet.

Resistance Action:



A damaged police vehicle after a roadside bomb attack in Baghdad December 16, 2008. The attack wounded three policemen. REUTERS/Atef Hassan

December 17, 2008 By Hussein Kadhim, McClatchy Newspapers & Dec 18 (KUNA) & Reuters

Police reported the discovery of the slain body of Jelawish Hussein, a member of the Communist [pro-U.S. Occupation] party in Kirkuk, who was stabbed in her home. Kirkuk is 250 km (155 miles) north of Baghdad.

A double explosion in Nahda in downtown Baghdad has killed three traffic policemen and injured eight more around 11 a.m. A car bomb detonated first targeting a traffic police patrol followed by a roadside bomb in a distance in a crowded area where the main bus station in Baghdad is located.

A roadside bomb targeted a police patrol in Palestine street (south Mosul) wounding including two policemen.

An explosive device detonated as a police patrol car passed near the shopping area in Baquba, Diyala's biggest city. Two police officers from the said patrol were insured.

Insurgents killed an off-duty traffic cop in western Mosul.



A destroyed police vehicle after a bomb attack in Khan Dhari in western Baghdad December 15, 2008. Nine policemen were killed and 31 by a bomber at their checkpoint, as attacks resumed after a period of uncommon calm, a police source said. REUTERS/Mohanned Faisal

OCCUPATION PALESTINE



A Palestinian boy holds a shoe with the word 'Bush' on it during a demonstration calling for the release of the Iraqi journalist Muntadar al-Zeidi in Gaza City, Palestine, Dec. 16, 2008. Iraqi journalist Muntadar al-Zeidi threw his shoes at President George W. Bush during a press conference in Baghdad on Sunday, while yelling in Arabic: 'This is a farewell kiss, you dog, this is from the widows, the orphans and those who were killed in Iraq.' (AP Photo/Hatem Moussa)

[To check out what life is like under a murderous military occupation by foreign terrorists, go to: www.rafahtoday.org The occupied nation is Palestine. The foreign terrorists call themselves "Israeli."]

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

DR. BERNANKE EXPLAINS QUANTITATIVE EASING

IF WE FEED THE BANKS ENOUGH
DOLLARS, SOMETHING GOOD IS
BOUND TO COME OUT THE
OTHER END EVENTUALLY...



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

**Here's A Change You Can Really
Believe In:**

**“Hey, Forget All That Shit I Said
About Torturers”**

[Even The New York Times Says Obama Not Keeping His Promises]

December 18, 2008 Editorial, New York Times [Excerpt]

Most Americans have long known that the horrors of Abu Ghraib were not the work of a few low-ranking sociopaths. All but President Bush's most unquestioning supporters recognized the chain of unprincipled decisions that led to the abuse, torture and death in prisons run by the American military and intelligence services.

Now, a bipartisan report by the Senate Armed Services Committee has made what amounts to a strong case for bringing criminal charges against former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld; his legal counsel, William J. Haynes; and potentially other top officials, including the former White House counsel Alberto Gonzales and David Addington, Vice President Dick Cheney's former chief of staff.

The report shows how actions by these men "led directly" to what happened at Abu Ghraib, in Afghanistan, in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and in secret C.I.A. prisons.

A prosecutor should be appointed to consider criminal charges against top officials at the Pentagon and others involved in planning the abuse.

Given his other problems — and how far he has moved from the powerful stands he took on these issues early in the campaign — we do not hold out real hope that Barack Obama, as president, will take such a politically fraught step.

More Change You Can Really Believe In!

Obama Picks Preacher Who Says God Wants The Government To Kill The President Of Iran For Invocation Speaker At Inaugural;

“He Has Called Christians Who Advance A Social Gospel Marxists And Is Opposed To Women Having A Legal Right To Choose An Abortion”

[But Hey, Who's Perfect, Right?]



Saddleback Church Pastor Rick Warren September 26, 2008 (Chip East/Files/Reuters)

[Thanks to Lassiter Jones, NOLA discussion group, for spotting this one.]

12.17.08 By Sam Stein, Huffington Post & Dec 4th, Matt Duss, Wonk Room [Excerpts]

On Wednesday, the transition team and Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies announced that Rick Warren, pastor of the powerful Saddleback Church, would give the invocation on January 20th.

Obama and Warren are reportedly close -- Obama praised the Megachurch leader in his second book "The Audacity of Hope."

"Pastor Warren, while enjoying a reputation as a moderate based on his affable personality and his church's engagement on issues like AIDS in Africa, has said that the real difference between James Dobson and himself is one of tone rather than substance," read a statement from People For the American Way President Kathryn Kolbert.

"He has repeated the Religious Right's big lie that supporters of equality for gay Americans are out to silence pastors. He has called Christians who advance a social gospel Marxists. He is adamantly opposed to women having a legal right to choose an abortion."

Appearing on Fox's Hannity and Colmes last night to promote his new book, Pastor Rick Warren made a brief foray into foreign policy.

Responding to Hannity's assertion that "we need to take him (Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad) out," Warren agreed, saying that stopping evil "is the legitimate role of government. The Bible says that God puts government on earth to punish evildoers."

Transcript:

HANNITY: Can you talk to rogue dictators? Ahmadinejad denies the Holocaust, wants to wipe Israel off the map, is seeking nuclear weapons.

WARREN: Yes.

HANNITY: I think we need to take him out.

WARREN: Yes.

HANNITY: Am I advocating something dark, evil or something righteous?

WARREN: Well, actually, the Bible says that evil cannot be negotiated with. It has to just be stopped. And I believe...

HANNITY: By force?

WARREN: Well, if necessary.

In fact, that is the legitimate role of government. The Bible says that God puts government on earth to punish evildoers. Not good-doers. Evildoers.

Troops Invited:

Comments, arguments, articles, and letters from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Write to Box 126, 2576 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10025-5657 or send email contact@militaryproject.org: Name, I.D., withheld unless you request publication. Same address to unsubscribe. Phone: 917.677.8057

**Quit Whining About Him;
He's History:
Have The Courage, And The Common
Decency, To Go After The People
Who Put Him There:**

They're Still Going To Be Running The Government By And For The Empire After He's Gone



The traitor Bush arrives at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, December 18, 2008. (Jim Young/Reuters)

**POLITICIANS CAN'T BE COUNTED ON TO HALT
THE BLOODSHED**

**THE TROOPS HAVE THE POWER TO STOP THE
WARS**

**DO YOU HAVE A FRIEND OR RELATIVE IN THE
MILITARY?**

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CLASS WAR REPORTS



Lebanon



Shoes are set atop an effigy of U.S. President George W. Bush, at a rally in Beirut, Dec. 17, 2008, to demand the release of Iraqi journalist Muntadhar al-Zeidi, from custody in Iraq. The Iraqi journalist al-Zeidi threw his shoes at President George W. Bush. (AP Photo/Bilal Hussein)

Turkey: “Murderer U.S.A. Get Out Of The Middle East!”



A group of Turkish protesters stand outside the U. S. embassy, rear center, to protest against the invasion in Iraq and to express the solidarity with Iraqi journalist Muntadar al-Zeidi, in Ankara, Turkey, Dec. 18, 2008. The banner reads: ' Murderer U.S.A. get out of the Middle East!' (AP Photo/Burhan Ozbilici)

Greece: 13th Day Of Resistance; Street Fighting At The Parliament



Protesters against the government fight riot police in front of the parliament building in Athens December 18, 2008. Greek protesters launched firebombs at police outside parliament on Thursday in a 13th day of protests since police killed a teenager. (Oleg Popov/Reuters)

World Wide: His Words Coming Home Again



“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.”

Frederick Douglass, 1852

**“Protests Among High-School And
College Students Is Particularly
Striking Because It Is An Age Group
That Hasn’t Been Politically Active
Since The Early 1980s”**

“Thousands Of Students Were Joined By Striking Workers In A Fifth Day Of Protests In Greece, An Uprising That Mirrors Growing Discontent Among Youths In Many European Countries”

DECEMBER 11, 2008 By PHILIP PANGALOS and DAVID GAUTHIER-VILLARS, Wall St. Journal

Thousands of students were joined by striking workers in a fifth day of protests in Greece, an uprising that mirrors growing discontent among youths in many European countries over outdated education systems, lack of jobs and a general apprehension about the future.

From Rome to Berlin to Madrid, young people graduate from university much later than their peers in Northern Europe, the U.S. or U.K. When they do, they struggle to find long-term jobs with social-security benefits.

In Germany, many young people -- including large numbers of university graduates -- have struggled in recent years to find employment that pays a full wage. Instead, they have found themselves working as interns for no or low pay for long periods. German media have dubbed such economically insecure young people “Generation Intern.”

In Spain, a generation of young people is entering the workplace with few benefits or protections, often moving between temporary contracts so that employers can avoid the country’s onerous employment laws. The media have dubbed them “mileuristas” -- loosely, those who scrape by on a thousand euros a month.

In Greece, this same group has been dubbed “Generation 600” -- referring to the country’s national minimum wage of €600 (about \$776) a month.

French students are planning a nationwide protest against government plans aimed at giving state universities more autonomy in managing their budgets.

Students fear this will create a two-tier system, with wealthy campuses attracting private funds and poorer colleges languishing. Three years ago, French students took to the streets to protest the “precarious” nature of a new temporary job contract the government was trying to introduce.

Last month, thousands of Italian students took to the streets to protest the government’s attempt to change laws governing the entire school system, including cutting budgets for state universities.

The backdrop for Wednesday’s demonstrations was a general strike -- planned by unions before rioting started Saturday -- to protest the conservative government’s economic policies, including changes to pension laws and privatizations.

Thousands of high-school and university students walked out of class and joined the demonstrations to protest their discontent with the government's higher-education and employment policies.

"For decades, Greeks have been pursuing the American dream: plenty of money, nice cars," said Eleanna Horiti, 42, an Athens architect.

"But for Greek teenagers, the American dream has now vanished."

The Greek economy has enjoyed a decade of rapid expansion and is expected to grow about 2% next year.

But one lingering dark spot is unemployment among young people.

Some 25% of Greeks 15 to 24 years of age are unemployed, meaning the benefits of the country's economic expansion haven't been equally distributed, said Claude Giorno, an economist at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Meanwhile, many students can't get into Greece's highly selective state universities and are forced to go abroad or to local branches of foreign universities, said Achilles Kanellopoulos, dean and CEO of the American University of Athens.

The problem, he said, is that in most instances the Greek state recognizes only state universities. "It's unfair," he said.

Alexander Kitroeff, associate professor in history at Haverford College, said the length of protests among high-school and college students is particularly striking because it is an age group that hasn't been politically active since the early 1980s.

But now, he said, "they feel that they're not getting jobs and that they don't have the same opportunities" of earlier generations.

The clashes across Greece were set off over the weekend after the fatal shooting by police of a 15-year-old boy during an altercation. A Greek court Wednesday ordered that two policemen be held in jail pending trial for the shooting. One was charged with murder.

RECEIVED

The New IVAW Coffee House At Fort Lewis

From: Marilyn D
To: GI Special
Sent: December 17, 2008 8:39 PM
Subject: RE: GI Special 6L10: Bridging The Gap

The coffee houses were a major factor in turning the military and others against the [Vietnam] war. I am glad to see their resurgence.

If you cannot trust your army, navy, and air force to carry out missions, how can you wage war?

Unfortunately it took another 20,000 KIA's before administration admitted that the war was lost.

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END THE OCCUPATIONS**

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

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Telling the truth - about the occupations 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 to Imperial wars 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 Veterans Against the War to end the occupations and bring all troops home now! (www.ivaw.org/)**

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