

Carl Zuckmayer on the Christmas Truce of 1914 (Retrospective account, 1966)

Abstract

This is a German account of the “Christmas Truce”—the temporary halt to fighting between the troops of various nations on Christmas in 1914. Author Carl Zuckmayer wrote in his memoir (published in the 1960s) about such a meeting between German and French soldiers.

Source

[...]

Around Christmas 1914, in the trenches west of Roye, which were close together, the soldiers themselves stopped the nightly shooting that was common even on quiet fronts—instead of hand grenades, they threw packets of sausage or chocolate over the barbed wire fences. In one Hessian regiment, a German patrol struck up a conversation with a French one, they shook hands and invited each other into the dugouts. The Germans brought beer or schnapps with them, the French wine. This happened, of course, without the knowledge of the officers—until one night when a young lieutenant on patrol in the dugout of a German corps found a couple of cheerfully feasting Frenchmen who had unbuckled their belts and set their rifles in the corner. Out of stubbornness or a sense of duty, he immediately had them arrested and taken away as prisoners, and that was the end of this brief fraternization.

[...]

Source of original German text: Carl Zuckmayer, *Als wärs ein Stück von mir. Horen der Freundschaft*. Frankfurt, 1966, pp. 195–6.

Translation: Insa Kummer

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