

THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914 IN THE FILM *JOYEUX NOËL* (2005)

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The 2005 film Joyeux Noël describes events on the Western Front on Christmas Day in 1914. After several months of trench warfare under difficult weather conditions, singing carols on Christmas Eve began a spontaneous truce known as the Christmas Truce, which included Christmas day itself. The analysis of the film traces the French-German conflicts, the possibility of joint action by Christian churches, and elements of interaction.

Keywords: First World War, Western Front, Christmas Truce, film, Joyeux Noël, European integration, French-German relations, ecumenism, European identity

Film Joyeux Noël iz leta 2005 opisuje dogodke na zahodni fronti na božični dan leta 1914. Po nekaj mesecih težkih bitk v rovih in naduse neprijetih vremenskih razmerah je s petjem na božični večer začelo spontano premirje, znano kot božični premor, ki je vključeval tudi božični dan.

Analiza filma zasleduje francosko-nemške konflikte, možnosti skupnega delovanja krščanskih cerkva in elementov interakcije. Ključne besede: Prva svetovna vojna, Zahodna fronta, Božično premirje, film, Joyeux Noël, evropska integracija, francosko-nemški odnosi, ekumenizem, evropska identiteta

JOYEUX NOËL: PRODUCTION, CONTENT, RECEPTION, PRECURSORS

The film *Joyeux Noël* (2005) is a story of the Christmas Truce and fraternization of warring parties on the Western Front in December 1914. The film was co-produced by companies from five countries. The French producer Nord-Ouest is listed as the main producer, and the coproduction partners are Senator Film Produktion from Germany, The Bureau from the UK, Artémis Productions from Belgium, Media Pro Pictures from Romania, and the French TV channel TF1 Films Production. The film was shot by Euroimages, the Council of Europe's Cultural Support Fund, which financially assists European coproduction projects.

The screenplay for the film was written by the French scriptwriter and director Christian Carion,¹ who also directed the film. The film describes a bloody trench war on the Western Front in 1914 with numerous casualties in battles just before Christmas. After heavy fighting and an enormous death toll, the officers and soldiers in trenches—French, Scots, and Germans—expect a calm during the Christmas holidays. Christmas Eve begins in a Scottish trench with the song “I’m Dreaming of Home” followed by bagpipes, which encourages the German opera singer to sing the carol “Silent Night.”² The Scottish pastor with bagpipes joins in the Christmas carols, and at the end applause echoes from the British trench. During the singing, the singer sets a Christmas tree on the parapet, which

¹ Christian Carion's filmography consists of five films. In all five films, Carion is a scriptwriter and a director (http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0137228/?ref_=tt_ov_dr, accessed February 21st, 2018).

² “Silent Night” is a carol composed in 1818 by the Austrian teacher Franz Xaver Gruber (1787–1863; Cudworth 1963).

is followed by other soldiers. He is accompanied by the Scottish bagpipes, and during the song a singer takes one Christmas tree and rises from the trench. The end of the song follows the applause of the Scots, who came out of the trenches. Then the pastor on the bagpipes starts and the singer joins in another carol, “O, Come Ye All Faithful,”³ and moves towards the opponents’ position. Then three officers—German, Scottish, and French—come to no man’s land, where they agree on a ceasefire for Christmas Eve. A French officer brings champagne, three officers and a German singer toast, and everyone expresses Christmas greetings in his own language. Fireworks made by signaling rockets and applause from the trenches trigger soldiers to leave the trenches and meet on no man’s land. An exchange of food, beverages, and cigarettes begins, as well as showing family photos. The meeting ends after the *Ave Maria*, a joint prayer led by the Scottish priest. Christmas morning begins when one of the Scots in no man’s land digs a grave to bury his brother, which leads to an agreement to continue the truce and bury the dead whose bodies lie between the trenches. In addition to coffee served by officers and soldiers, an improvised soccer match is played, with goals made from a bunch of clothes and a real whistle, while soldiers play cards in the shell craters. Due to an announced German artillery attack on the French-Scottish lines, the German officer calls on the French and the Scots to get into a German trench that will be safe. Expecting retaliatory fire on the German trenches, the Scottish officer suggests that the Germans get into the Allied trench for that occasion.

Immediately after the Christmas Truce, punishment for all three armies followed, including the redeployment of the entire German unit to the Eastern Front, the expulsion of the Scottish pastor from the army, the dissolution of the Scottish regiment, and the transfer of the French officer and soldiers that took part in the Christmas Truce.

The film was portrayed at the Cannes Film Festival and nominated for an Academy Award in the Best Foreign Language Films category. It was a relative financial success in France, but the total film revenue of \$17 million did not cover the production cost of \$22 million.⁴

Joyeux Noël is not the first portrayal of the Christmas Truce in visual media. A longer excerpt from the film *Oh! What a Lovely War*⁵ (directed by Richard Attenborough, 1969) and the 1983 musical video *Pipes of Peace* already created a film notion about the events that occurred on the Western Front during the Christmas in 1914.

In the musical *Oh! What a Lovely War*, the comedy elements consist of choreographed music of marches and patriotic songs, distorted notions of historical events, and situations such as the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, which were cut off by realistic portrayals of trench warfare on the Western Front. In one of these sequences, lasting nearly ten minutes,

³ The carol “O, Come Ye All Faithful” is considered to have been written by John Francis Wade (1711–1786), an English hymnwriter (McKim 1993: 42). Although this authorship has been called into question (Zon 1996), there is no doubt the song belongs to the Scottish Highlander identity represented in the film.

⁴ http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0424205/?ref_=nm_filmg_dr_4 (accessed February 21st, 2018).

⁵ The part of the film on Christmas truce lasts just over ten minutes: 0:53:10 to 1:04:50.

the Christmas Truce begins on Christmas Eve with a carol in the German trench and then in the British trench, and a call from the German trench to meet the next day in no man's land. The German soldiers start to leave the trenches, and the Scots join them. In addition to wishing each other a merry Christmas, telling several military jokes, and sharing drinks, it also shows how a German soldier gives the address of a girl living in England to a British soldier and asks him to write and tell her that he is alive and well. Artillery fire interrupts the Christmas truce, and the Scots clearly say that it is not their "artillery," but from "the damned English."

Material in Paul McCartney's 1983 music video "Pipes of Peace"⁶ also takes place on the Western Front and consists of a simultaneous indifferent emergence from trenches by the British and Germans. They shake hands in no man's land, after which they play soccer, share drinks, and show family photos. At the moment when the artillery shelling starts, the British and German soldiers split up with exchanged family photos. The musical video ends with a satisfied, almost blissful expression on the face of the British soldier, who looks at a photo despite of the obvious exchange.⁷ The overtly pacifist McCartney music video represents the revival of the idea from "All You Need Is Love," showing that the soldiers on both sides have the same sensitivities and feelings, and that there is no reason to fight (Crocker 2015: 215–216).

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

TRENCH WARFARE IN WORLD WAR ONE

During the First World War, most fronts experienced trench warfare. Trench warfare is as a set of military operations involving two entrenched armies. It is a stalemate in which neither side can break through the opponents' defense, regardless of the scope of operations (Saunders 2010: 13).

Military historians consider the eighteenth-century city sieges, in which trenches were dug all around the besieged cities, to be the precursor to trench warfare (Saunders 2010: 8), as well as a specific war technique (the *pā* system) used by New Zealand's Maoris in war with the British (Belich 1986: 325–332). Development of long-range firearms allowed trench warfare to be applied from mid-nineteenth century onward in the Crimean War (1853–1856), American Civil War (1861–1865), Boer War (1899–1900), and Russo–Japanese war (1904–1905; Saunders 2010: 9–10; Ashworth 1980: 1).

⁶ The music video lasts 3 minutes 50 seconds (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TwyFTRGiIUU>) –accessed February 2nd, 1918). The Christmas Truce is also theme of the song "All Together Now (In No Man's Land)" by the Liverpool group *The Farm* from 1991 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRgtzZ-mOQo>, accessed April 3rd, 2018).

⁷ A similar plot, as well as visual concepts, between the music video and the film *Oh! What a Lovely War* indicate that the music video was made under significant influence of the film.

On the Western Front, during the First World War, trench warfare began in the fall of 1914.⁸ The beginning of war on the Western Front created a false impression (Ellis 1976: 3) that this war would be one of maneuvering warfare. By the end of October it had become clear that the situation on the front was such that a swift ending to the war was impossible and the opposing armies had to dig trenches. Modern weaponry made soldiers easy targets on an open field, and so it was necessary to build concealment (Ellis 1976: 4). Sharpshooters with the first optical sights shot enemy soldiers that were not concealed with relative ease (Pegler 2008). Strategic reasons made the German army partial to building safe and solid trenches because they deemed the occupied territory conquered and were ready to defend it from the enemy's attempts to take it back. In contrast to the Germans, the English and French considered their positions temporary and that the French would sooner or later regain the territory occupied by Germans.⁹ This is why they did not pay much attention to trench building at the beginning of trench warfare, and so their trenches were shallow and inadequately protected (Ellis 1976: 10; Pegler 2008: 56–57). Poor weather and the arrival of winter caused the complete formation of trenches on both sides, spanning from the Atlantic to the border with Switzerland.

Aside from the constant threat of sniper and artillery fire, life in the trenches was extremely difficult. Regardless of the depth of the digging and pumping water, trenches often filled with water and mud that made movement difficult. Low temperatures froze the mud and made communication on the front line easier, but the below-zero temperatures threatened frostbite. Moreover, the water and mud disabled weapons that could not be put in a dry place (Saunders 2010: 107). Soldiers suffered from various illnesses—from the common cold, pneumonia, and dysentery to specific trench diseases¹⁰ such as trench influenza, Weil's disease (leptospirosis), trench foot, or trench mouth (gingivitis; Millar 2010). Contrary to the expectations that war would be over soon, soldiers on both sides faced the extremely difficult conditions of trench warfare.

CHRISTMAS TRUCE AND FRATERNIZATION

The Christmas Truce and fraternization have been a subject of various historical studies. In-depth studies of English, French, and German historical sources, from military reports to letters from the soldiers in trenches, have shown that truces and fraternizations occurred not only at Christmas of 1914, and they took various forms (Ferro et al. 2007).

⁸ Other front lines had long periods of trench warfare. The Macedonian Front saw predominantly trench warfare during 1917 and 1918, until the frontline penetration (Opačić 2004: 101–116), and the Italian front, aside from frequent operations, was also marked by trench warfare (Thomson 2008).

⁹ Similar to the French, Serbian soldiers on the Macedonian Front did not dig deep and solid trenches because Serbia was far away and reachable only by advancing, not digging in (Ristić 1971: 231).

¹⁰ Articles on trench warfare were published in the *British Medical Journal* in the very first years of the war (McNeil 1915; Mcnee et al. 1916).

“At the first Christmas of a war that would last for over four years, and leave a long-lasting legacy of grief and dismay not only in Europe but across the world, German and British soldiers sang carols to each other, lit each other’s cigarettes in the space between the trenches, exchanged souvenirs, took group photographs and even played football together. Some sort of friendly accommodation of the enemy, from cheerful waves and shouted greetings to full-scale fraternization, took place over two-thirds of the sector of the Western Front held by the British Expeditionary Force” (Brown 2007: 13).

There is some information on the Christmas Truce and fraternization events of 1914 in French sources, albeit much less, which can be attributed to censorship that soldiers’ letters had to undergo, but also to less enthusiasm by the French to establish a ceasefire with an enemy that occupied parts of their homeland.¹¹ German memoirs cited by the historian Olaf Mueller also confirm the events of the Christmas Truce (Mueller 2007: 167).

Various historical studies of the Christmas Truce, as well as other events in which soldiers agreed on a ceasefire and fraternized on no man’s land, attempt to reconstruct the events, determine the scope of the ceasefire, and analyze the causes that led to such phenomena. Some of the possible causes cited were climate conditions, cold, and water and mud in the trenches, as well as individual reasons such as fear, emotions caused by mass killings, uncertainty of personal wellbeing, and the extent of war, and also possible ideological influences of pacifism and internationalism (Weintraub 2001; Brown 2007; Crocker 2015). The film does not deal with these levels of causal explanation, but presents deeper levels of meaning that make the Christmas truce understandable and acceptable from the perspective of the time when the movie was made.

CONNOTATION: BASES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN *JOYEUX NOËL*

RELIGIOUS BASIS – CHRISTIAN BASIS OF THE EUROPE

The main cause of truce and fraternization is Christmas. All of the warring parties are Christians, although they belong to different churches. The Germans (Saxons) are predominately Protestants, the Scots are Anglicans or Catholics, and the French are Catholics. The greatest Christian holiday is uniquely experienced in all of the varieties of Christianity represented on the front. The Christmas prayer, which follows the ceasefire agreement and truce, is led by a Scottish pastor, and a Swedish singer sings the *Ave Maria*. The roots of European civilization are present in Christianity and in Latin, in which the *Ave Maria* and a brief prayer are given by the pastor, along with the participation by the soldiers of all three armies. In the course of making the agreement for the truce, it is clearly stated that Christmas Eve is the main reason for the ceasefire. This does not mean that religion is the

¹¹ A year later, after a full year of difficult trench warfare, Christmas truces also occurred between French and German soldiers (Cazals 2007: 81).

sole amalgam that brought together warring sides on Christmas Eve. The Scottish pastor himself, stressing the significance of Christmas, does not push a religious component: “Tonight these men are drawn to the altar as to flames in winter. Even those who are not pious came to warm up. Maybe to forget the war.”

The film describes a time in which decades ago, during the second half of the nineteenth century, strong ecumenical ideas arose, and 1910 is considered to be the basis for the institutionalization of the ecumenical movement, as well as the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (Fitzgerald 2004: 82–84). Further institutionalization of the ecumenical movement (Nikolić & Petković 2011) occurred during twentieth century in order to form the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948 (Fitzgerald 2004: 109–110). The ecumenical movement gained strength after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), when the Catholic Church actively joined; however, officially it was not part of the council (Fitzgerald 2004: 133–136). The common mass held by the Scottish pastor represents ecumenism at work, with the scenario being supported by the historical facts of strengthening and institutionalizing the ecumenical movement before the First World War. On the other hand, at the time of creating the content in the film, the Conference of European Churches was already working with the Catholic Council of Bishops’ Conferences of Europe with the same ecumenical goals (Nikolić & Petković 2011: 289–291), with a unique view of the unity of European churches.

In contrast to the pastor that held the mass in the film, a senior commanding officer appears, who orders him to leave the unit and return to Scotland. In his speeches to the new soldiers, he takes a completely opposite stance. The content of that genocidal speech, although he calls upon God in almost every sentence, is in fact a call to kill and exterminate the enemy: “With God’s help, you must kill the Germans, good or bad, young or old. Kill every one of them.” Leaving the religious domain, regardless of the rhetorical calling upon God, this speech, quite in the spirit of the war propaganda, cannot replace the significance of the religious component of the Christmas Truce present in the inspiration to sing Christmas carols together and the song *Ave Maria*, as well as the Christmas prayer. Like the genocidal songs, which are recited at the beginning of the film by children in all three countries, this speech shows clearly where the obstacles lie for peace and community, and how important it is that heads of state act toward an agreement that will stop wars.

Therefore, attempts to build Europeans, based on a common religion both by the creators of European identity in European institutions and by integrating European religious organizations, can be added to the presentation of the communion at Christmas in no man’s land in *Joyeux Noël*.

POLITICAL GROUNDWORK – FRENCH-GERMAN BASIS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AND SCOTTISH-ENGLISH DISAGREEMENT OVER EURO-INTEGRATION

The initial restraint of the French in going into no man’s land, where the German and Scottish officers are already taking place in negotiations about a truce, indicates that the

long-term French-German animosity is one of the hardest things to overcome in the course of making a community. By adding the French, part of whose territory was occupied by the Germans at that time, hostilities were suspended, regardless of the individual dissatisfaction of soldiers. The film with this historical reminiscence confirms the importance of the Élysée Treaty, which were the key to European integration.

The process of European integration began with creating the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951 and the European Atomic Energy Community in 1957. The Treaty of Rome in 1957 created the European Economic Community as a customs union and a joint market of six European countries: France, Germany, Italy, and the Benelux countries. The economic relationship that was established was completed by a political declaration on the permanent reconciliation of France and Germany, two countries that have often fought during the course of history and whose conflicts were a foundation of major European and world wars. When the 1963 Élysée Treaty, signed by French President Charles De Gaulle and German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, established lasting reconciliation between the two countries, the paths of further European integration were opened in terms of expanding to other countries and also in the direction of linking the countries into one supranational community. That treaty is considered a founding political act of European integration, and even the creator of European integration, Maurice Schumann, stated that a united Europe should be based on French-German reconciliation (Soutou 1996).

Begun with Schuman's visionary proposals in 1950, the process of establishing reconciliation between France and Germany and contracting permanent peace was realized in 1963. The Élysée Treaty does not have a direct connection with European integration because it is a particular agreement between two states; however, regardless of that particularity, it represented the *conditio sine qua non* and the guarantee without which the coal and steel agreement, and even the customs union, would be insufficient to direct the integration process toward today's European Union.

Joyeux Noël, showing the Christmas Truce and fraternization in 1914 in the midst of the war, which led to large scale human casualties, shows that even in the most unfortunate times there was behavior, if not an articulate idea, implying that wars, and especially the French-German conflict, should be avoided and replaced with cooperation. From the perspective of half a century of integration founded by the Élysée Treaty, points can be made that history is not only a trail of French-German wars and disputes, and the Christmas Truce is one such point. Its significance is that it is not an agreement between emperors, presidents, or generals, but a desire that stems from the needs of people themselves, who were represented by junior officers and the soldiers themselves in no man's land in December 1914.

At the same time, by including Scots as a third party in the Christmas Truce, the film reflects the attitude towards those that have a consistent commitment to European integration against the policy of the UK, which has all along been considered an "unreliable partner." Since joining the European Union in 1973, the UK has been on the sidelines of many processes that have built a strong community of countries. It never joined the

Schengen Agreement of complete freedom of movement within the European Union, nor it did replace its currency with the euro, which was introduced in 2002.¹² Remaining outside the Schengen Agreement and the eurozone was followed by a referendum on leaving the European Union in June 2016, when 51.6% of voters cast their votes to leave.¹³

The distance from the European Union, which it was part of for half a century, was reflected in the relations within the UK itself, primarily in the relations of the countries that make up the UK, as well as in the relations of these countries toward the European Union. The struggle to introduce a Scottish Parliament, after a majority decision in the first referendum in 1979, was continued in a new referendum in 1997, in which 70% voted in favor, and with that the Scottish Parliament was restored after two and a half centuries. During two decades of struggle for the Scottish Parliament, most political parties in Scotland expressed a strong pro-European orientation (Sloat 2002: 19–21).¹⁴

By highlighting Scottish participation in the Christmas Truce, the film underlines intra-British relations towards the European community, which have been known at the level of political attitudes since Britain's entry into the European Union and hints at the regional difference in the results of the referendum in 2016.

ELEMENTS OF THE EUROPEAN IDENTITY

Anthropology observes film as a field, just like a “real” field in which the processes studied by anthropology are taking place. Film is produced and acts “in the field” and creates meanings that anthropological analysis decodes and makes explicit. These meanings, as well as those generated by all other “readings” of a film, have an impact and make changes that are subject to the field and interpretative anthropological research. When one views a film as a complex artifact, as a constructed mode of action and relationship, then anthropologists, just like in real life, isolate and analyze elements that they consider to be of particular importance.¹⁵ Thus, *Joyeux Noël* can be viewed as a field in which elements of European identity are sought; that is, areas important for studying and understanding the Europeanization process. One such fruitfully applicable list of areas, or sphere of interaction,

¹² In addition, Britain had reservations in two other areas, the so-called opt out: in fundamental rights as well as in freedom, security, and justice.

¹³ According to official data from the British Parliament (Results of Devolution Referendums 1979, 1997; *Research Paper no. 97/113*, November 10th, 1997, Social & General Statistics Section. House of Commons Library; <http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/RP97-113/RP97-113.pdf>, accessed February 21st, 2018).

¹⁴ This orientation was held in Scotland until the referendum for Britain's exit from the European Union in 2016, when leaving the union was rejected with 62% of the vote. (<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/find-information-by-subject/elections-and-referendums/past-elections-and-referendums/eu-referendum/electorate-and-count-information>, accessed February 2nd, 2018).

¹⁵ In 2017, two volumes of the journal *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* were devoted to such conceptualized anthropological analysis of film. See, for example, Antonijević (2017), Žikić (2017), and Erdei (2017).

where Europeanization works was given by Borneman and Fowler, pointing out examples of language, money, tourism, sex, and sports (1997: 498). Pointing to film elements that relate to these five spheres of interaction shows how and to what extent the film acts as an agent of Europeanization.

Language – *Multilingualism*. The film was shot multilingually, which means that everyone uses his or her own language. At a time when communication is being established between different sides, knowledge of foreign languages comes to light. Foreign languages that allow communication are spoken by officers, whereas ordinary soldiers, in already reduced communication, use gestures. The French officer speaks English, and the German officer, married to a French woman, knows French, whereby their triple communication is made possible. The primary multilingualism of the film corresponds to the official manner of communicating in the European Union, where all languages are equal and are considered official. At the beginning, when there were six member states, four languages were official; French, which was official in the European Coal and Steel Community (de Swaan 2001: 176), dominated in administration, and the number of official languages has been increasing with the number of member states. Parallel to this process and to some extent caused by it, the dominance of English appeared. This dominance, which was established independently from the British influence in the European Union (de Swaan 2001: 176–177) and is a result of the strong involvement of English in all aspects of globalization, was partially avoided in the film, even though only the British officer speaks his own language.

Money – *Exchange*. In a film that describes interactive events between the warring sides on the front line, there is no place for money. In a wartime situation, determined by separation with trenches, goods cannot be paid for with money, even when the soldiers are fraternizing during the Christmas Truce. Trade in no man's land is carried out through exchange instead of money. The exchange of beverages, cigarettes, and food indicates that interconnection by exchanging, at least temporarily, replaces warfare and that economic cooperation eliminates disputes over the past. During the Christmas fraternization, there was no trade, not even swapping, but mutual bestowment. However, the interchangeability of various products points to a prewar situation in which international trade expanded its choice of consumption, but even more so to the modern situation of the European Union, with completely free movement of goods under duty-free conditions. Multiculturalism is expressed through various traditional products that are part of the exchange. Consumption of whiskey, schnapps, cognac, or champagne is possible, and the safety of consuming other products is clearly demonstrated. Instead of vulnerability and fear that something of "ours" is disappearing, the exchange hints at enriching choices in every integrated European location. Therefore, multiculturalism does not have to cause disgust and hatred, but can be reduced to harmless humor, which, for example, arises when a German soldier tries to play the bagpipes.

Tourism and freedom of movement during war, when movement is bounded by fronts, are a wish or an ideal. The German officer speaks about how he spent his honeymoon in Paris,

and in an exchange of military optimism shifted with a rational prediction of the outcome of war as an alternative to military victory, which will renew the stay of the German officer in Paris, a possibility of a tourist visit is mentioned.¹⁶ Tourism implies freedom of movement, whose peak is reflected in removing border crossings and the establishment of single travel documents that commenced seventy years later with the first Schengen Agreement of 1985.¹⁷ The issue that occurs in the conversation between two officers from enemy armies is manifested as opposition to the conquest of territory and a tourist visit. The unequivocal message of the film is in favor of tourism and any other unlimited movement and travel.

Sex, love, marriage and family. Borneman and Fowler have pointed out that sexual practices are a field where “interactions between nationals across class and status groups within and outside Europe” (1997: 505) are reflected. This potential field of anthropological analysis of Europeanization can also expand to love, marriage, and family relations, and can be viewed in *Joyeux Noël*. The only love scene in the film is between the German opera singer and the Swedish opera singer, who are in a lasting love affair. The other marriage–family affairs described in the film are the marriage between the German officer and a French woman, and the marriage of the French officer. The German officer was in Paris on his wedding trip, and the French officer is in a state of uncertainty because his wife is supposed to give birth but he has received no news about this. Using the Christmas Truce, the adjutant of the French officer went behind the German lines and found out that the officer’s wife had given birth to a boy. Both marriages are presented as a result of romantic love that has resulted in happy events such as a wedding, a wedding trip, or the birth of a child. The romantic love in the marriage of the French officer is emphasized by an episode in which he loses his wallet with his wife’s picture, and then creates a drawing of her from memory. After this, the German officer returns the wallet to him with the photo that he found by chance. Of the three love affairs described in the film, two are bi-national, and one is between members of the warring sides, which should underline the absurdity of such a war.

The mutual showing of family pictures by other soldiers clearly shows the equal family values of the warring sides and points to a common value system in which the family is of exceptional significance. Showing pictures is accompanied by emotional outbursts that suggest that all of them attach importance to love, marriage, and family. In this manner, a family based on a marriage of love is expressed as a general European value in the film.

Sport – Football. It was completely natural that the idea of playing soccer also arose in the peaceful atmosphere that was spreading at Christmas. Soldiers on both sides played soccer in an organized manner when they were away from the forward line of the front

¹⁶ The German officer says: “But after all, when we conquer Paris and when everything is over, you can invite us for a drink on Veven Street,” to which the French officer replies: “You don’t have to conquer Paris to stop by for a drink.”

¹⁷ At time the film was made, the Schengen Agreement covered thirteen European Union countries (i.e., all except the UK and Ireland), as well as Norway and Iceland.

(Adams 2015: 10; Brown 2007: 44). However, if one has in mind a real “soccer match” when playing soccer in no man’s land is mentioned, historical research has not confirmed one large international match between England and Germany, as would be the case at the European Championship, with eleven players on both sides, goalposts, and a judge (Adams 2015: 16).

Rather there were a number of random, swiftly arranged matches, sometimes with caps for goals and scores kept (The *Times* [sic] reported a game won by the Germans with a score of 3–2, though it did not name the units that took part), whereas elsewhere they were simply general *mêlées* with anybody that wanted to join in having a kick at the ball. Here and there genuine leather balls were produced, although at least one game, which the British claim to have won, was played with a tin can. A report by a German lieutenant explains why such games were possible: he wrote: “We marked the goals with our caps. Teams were quickly established for a match on the frozen mud, and the Fritzes beat the Tommies 3–2.” In short, it was the sudden Christmas frost, making ground which would otherwise have been too soft to play on reasonably firm and hard, that made it possible that the attempt could be made. On the whole, however, far more games were proposed than ever took place. (Brown 2007: 44)

The representation of the soccer match in the film corresponds to some of the descriptions in the letters from the front, and in the scene where censors read military letters it is clear that the match had a result and that the victory of the Germans was the result of a number of German soldiers having played soccer in the Munich club *Bayern*.

Soccer between the Germans and Scots in no man’s land followed the history of soccer in Europe, when soccer clubs and regional and national championships were founded in the second half of the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth century. The popularity of soccer explains the will of the soldiers to kick the ball under such conditions. In the context of the Christmas Truce, the film, through playing soccer in no man’s land, respects and encourages the desire for victory followed by cheering, but points to the idea that sports rivalries can replace confrontations and clashes that lead to warfare and large-scale killing. Through the history of European soccer after the Second World War, it is possible to observe two directions. The first is that sports (soccer) rivalry between countries can replace military conflicts, and the second is that soccer rivalries spark national euphoria (Đorđević 2017) and can lead to new conflicts and wars. The first idea constituted European soccer competitions one decade after the Second World War ended, this being the competition of national champions in the European Champion Clubs’ Cup (1955) and the competition of national teams in the UEFA European Nations’ Cup (1960). After their establishment, both competitions represented competition between countries regardless of whether teams or the best clubs were at issue. With the strengthening of EU

integration and establishment of a unified system of work and employment, the Bosman ruling was passed, according to which an unlimited number of players from the European Union can play on a soccer team. The clubs were thus “de-ethnicized” and it often happens that not a single player from the country of the club plays in the club. The second element of deconstruction of national rivalry is the introduction of the UEFA Champions League (1992) competition, which since 1997 has included several teams from one country, which led to final matches in which two Spanish or two English clubs play with fewer Spaniards or English on the field (Kovačević & Žikić 2014: 795–796). Regardless of whether the issue is a substitution of real hostilities with sports competitions, or even reducing the possibility for soccer to build new nationalist passions, presenting soccer as an essential element of the Christmas Truce in *Joyeux Noël* is not a mere presentation of a reconstructed event, but a clear message. Therefore it is quite understandable that UEFA unveiled a monument in memory of the soccer played at Christmas 1914 at the centenary of the Christmas Truce in Comines-Warneton, Belgium.

CONCLUSION

When the political, religious, and identity aspects of the period when this film was made are taken as the viewpoints of its interpretation, it is evident that the basic message of *Joyeux Noël* bears the integrity of integration processes that have lasted on the European continent for more than fifty years. The choice of this particular historical event itself and its interpretation show that from the turbulent and hostile history of the European nations’ relations, primarily the French and the Germans, the event is focused in a manner that is presented in the film. Most of the events derive from a detailed knowledge of historical sources, which is shown by numerous works by historians, apart from the romance between the German singer and Swedish singer, the uncertainty related to the French officer’s wife’s delivery, two brothers from Scotland going to war, and other elements that build the dramatic story in a realistic frame. The direct evaluation of the trustworthiness of the events presented is conditioned by the relation between the goals of scholarly reconstruction and presentation according to rules of production of popular culture, which Malcolm Brown clearly speaks of, emphasizing that this is a feature film, not a documentary film (Ferro et al. 2007: 3), whereas Terri Blom Crocker believes that the film has little to do with reality observed as a whole war on the Western Front because it is an “interesting but insignificant event” (2015: 4). When one observes the history of the Western Front and even further the history of the First World War, the Christmas Truce is an unimportant event without any consequences for the course and outcome of the war. However, if this event is observed as a moment in which views of conflicts nowadays are acquired, especially the German-French wars, the conclusion of an agreement, and the building of the European Union on this foundation, then this event, apart from “being interesting,” has almost mythical significance. As in the

creation of a nation-state, history is created through descriptions of wars and battles with the enemy, and so integration processes seek their history in the processes of cooperation and fraternization. *Joyeux Noël* is an example of this second “creation of history.”

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BOŽIČNO PREMIRJE LETA 1914 IN FILM *JOYEUX NOËL* (2005)

Film Joyeux Noël iz leta 2005 opisuje dogodke na zahodni fronti na božični dan leta 1914. Po nekaj mesecih težkih bitk v rovih in nad vse neprijetih vremenskih razmerah je petje na božični večer začelo spontano premirje, znano kot božični premor, ki je vključeval tudi božični dan.

Božični večer se začne v škotskem jarku s pesmijo »Dreaming of Home«, sledijo dude, ki spodbujajo nemškega opernega pevca, da zapoje pesem »Sveta noč«. Škotski pastor se z dudami pridruži božičnim pevcem in zasliši se aplavz odmeva iz britanskega jarka. Zaradi napovedanega nemškega topniškega napada na francosko-škotske črte, nemški oficir predlaga Francozom in Škotom, naj vstopijo v nemški strelski jarek, škotski oficir pa v pričakovanju povračilnega ognja po nemških jarkih predlaga, da Nemci stopijo v zavezniški jarek. V prvem božičnem dnevu vojne, ki je trajala več kot štiri leta, opustošila Evropo in cel svet, so nemški, francoski in britanski vojaki peli pesmi drug drugemu, si medsebojno prižigali cigarete in si izmenjali spominke, se skupaj fotografirali in celo igrali nogomet.

Takoj po božičnem premirju je sledila kazen za vse tri vojske, vključno s prerazporeditvijo celotne nemške enote na vzhodno fronto, z izgonom škotskega pastora iz vojske, razpadom škotskega polka in premestitvijo francoskega častnika in vojakov, ki so sodelovali v božičnem premirju. V eni od teh sekvenc, ki trajajo skoraj deset minut, se božični premor začne na božični večer s pesmijo v nemškem rovu, nadaljuje v britanskem rovu; sledi klic iz nemškega rova, da bi se naslednji dan srečali na nikogaršnji zemlji. Poglobljene študije angleških, francoskih in nemških zgodovinskih virov, od vojaških poročil do pism vojakov v jarkih, so pokazale, da so se premirja in bratstva zgodila večkrat, torej ne le ob božiču leta 1914, in da so imela različne oblike.

Film je nastal v času poskusov oblikovati Evropejce z idejo, ki temelji na skupni religiji tako s strani ustvarjalcev evropske identitete v evropskih institucijah kot s strani evropskih verskih organizacij. S Škoti kot tretjo stran premirja film izpostavlja vse, ki se dosledno zavzemajo za evropsko povezovanje proti politiki Združenega kraljestva, ki je že od nekdaj veljalo za „nezanesljivega partnerja“.

Predstavitev nogometne tekme v filmu se ujema z nekaterimi opisi prizorišč; hkrati je jasno, da je bila zmaga Nemcev rezultat številnih nemških vojakov, ki so igrali nogomet v münchen-skem klubu Bayern. Prva povojna ideja je tako bila evropsko nogometno tekmovanje, desetletje po koncu druge svetovne vojne, in sicer tekmovanje nacionalnih prvakov v pokalu Evropskih prvakov (1955) in tekmovanje reprezentanc v Evropskem pokalu UEFA (1960).

Analiza političnih, verskih in identitetnih vsebin filma zasleduje francosko-nemške konflikte, možnosti skupnega delovanja krščanskih cerkva (ekumenizem) in elementov interakcije, ki se odvijajo skozi jezik, denar (izmenjavo), skozi pripovedi, turizem, ljubezen in družine, pa tudi z nogometno tekmo na nikogaršnji, moški zemlji.

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